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THE HOUSE

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WOODRUFF

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THE LITTLE HOUSE

HELEN S. WOODRUFF

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THE LITTLE HOUSE

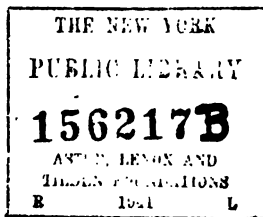
BY

HELEN S. WOODRUFF

AUTHOR OF "THE LADY OF THE LIGHTHOUSE"
"MIS' BEAUTY," ETC.

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F

TO
MY DEAR FRIEND
MARY NOBLE DORAN, 2ND
THIS BOOK IS LOVINGLY
DEDICATED



THE LITTLE HOUSE



THE LITTLE HOUSE

CHAPTER I

HER mother always called her Cherub, though her father, with the inborn literalness of his native hills, insisted that she ought to be called Dorothy, the name given her at her christening. However Cherub was a much more appropriate name, if we may rely upon the traditional conception of the artists, for she was round and pink and happy. It was perfectly plain that she had come straight down from heaven, that the sun had kissed her hair as she passed, and the kisses had clung like beams of gold; and that when she opened her eyes and smiled at it two bits of blue sky had stolen in and stayed.

At eventide, while Cherub watched the reluctant sun till it slipped off into its bed behind the hills, her mother used to sit and sing to her. She sang a song that had never been written,

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for the song of a mother's heart can only be sung; but Cherub loved it and always sailed away upon it to the Isle of Dreams. One evening, however, her mother did not come as usual to sing it to her after she had jumped into her little white bed; and she lay waiting and watching the sun nodding further and further down in the sky, until she too began to nod, and fell fast asleep.

The next morning a blue-jay called reveille from his home in the cedar just outside her window, and opening her eyes she remembered that she wanted most particularly to run and jump into her mother's bed and kiss her. So kicking off the covers she scrambled out and ran to the door that separated their rooms. She was a little surprised to find it shut, but quickly opened it and started towards the bed; then stopped short, bewildered, for she saw that her mother wasn't there and that a tall woman was standing by it arranging the pillows.

"Why! why are you here?" she asked in surprise; "and where's my Rosemother?"

The woman straightened up and stood



stiffly erect, saying in a crisp voice, "Your ma ain't here!"

"But where is she?" Cherub questioned, puzzled. "I want my mother!"

Samantha Hard's straight lips tightened and her face grew a shade more gray. "Your ma ain't here, I say."

"Well, where is she? I want her!"

The woman's pale eyes softened for an instant as she looked down into the rosy upturned face of the child. "She's gone," she answered, made awkward by the sudden rush of sympathy the manifestation of which she instinctively sought to repress.

"Gone! Gone where?" Cherub asked. Then receiving no answer she announced, "Rose-mother never goes anywhere! She just plays here with me!"

The woman still stood stiffly by, apparently unable to answer, and Cherub looking up into her thin hard face felt a sudden pang of fear and began to cry.

"Oh, tell me where Rosemother is! Tell me where she's gone!"

"To heaven—I hope," Samantha said

shortly. "But there, there, child, don't take on so!" as Cherub flung herself face down upon her mother's bed in a sudden burst of tears.

"Oh, but I know, I know!" the child sobbed. "She'll never come back, just like my kitten didn't come back when it went to heaven. I hate heaven. I hate it!" screaming by now and beating her little clenched hands hysterically upon the bed.

"Mercy!" Samantha exclaimed, horrified, and drew away involuntarily, shocked beyond words. A child showing such heathenish temper at such a time! Why it was blasphemous! What could her mother have been thinking of to allow her to say such things; and a picture of the mother as she had often seen her rose before her: "An ungodly enough looking critter to be sure!" she murmured, as she recalled the small girlish figure with its rosy mischievous face that looked out from a mass of clustering curls. "But how like her the child is!" again looking down at the tempestuous girl upon the bed.

Cherub had buried her face deeper in the pillows and was sobbing, "Rosemother—Rose-

mother!" as though her poor little heart would break.

"Blessed if I see what Reuben see in her, anyhow!" she muttered, as her thoughts returned to Cherub's mother. "A'bringing home a southern bride, when there was so many likely gals right here! It was plum crazy, that's what!"

And so it had seemed to the whole of Middleboro when Reuben Douglas, after a winter spent in the South, had come home married to his southern Rose.

They had gone straight to the old home that had once belonged to Reuben's grandfather, and had there proceeded to be very happy in spite of the neighbors' disapproval of the match.

Samantha recalled now the afternoon of their arrival. She had been watching from her back porch, and when the carriage drew up in front of Reuben's house she was able to take in every detail of the home-coming: Reuben, tall and gaunt, and beside him the little fair-haired wife, hardly larger than a child. They had laughingly jumped from the carriage,

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and, to Samantha's astonishment and disapproval, Reuben had led her, not to the house first, as any right-minded man would have done, but straight to the old apple orchard, pink with bloom. There beneath the trees they had seated themselves, without even so much as a peep inside the house.

"And bless you!" Samantha said, in telling it a few minutes afterward to an interested group at the postoffice, "she hadn't even tidied up! And there they set under them trees, a'laughing like two children; and pretty soon she up and twisted apple blossoms in her hair and begun to dance all over that orchard like she had seven devils in her, while Reuben Douglas stood there, his eyes just a'shining, and him seeming to enjoy the unholy sight!"

And so Middleboro had not approved or loved Rose Douglas, who danced and sang all day like a happy-hearted child. They called her "queer," and to be queer was, in their estimation, to be possessed of one of the twelve sins.

But the old house had made up its mind, evidently, to help Reuben make her happy, for



under the touch of her caressing hands its staid, austere frown faded away, and it blossomed into a very bower of climbing flowers. The gardens, too, did their share, clasping hands and surrounding it with a riotous mass of sweet color. The birds soon began to build their nests in the bushes and trees all about, and the sky seemed bluer and clearer over that particular spot than anywhere else. Their front door always stood hospitably open, and the sunlight laughed in at the parlor windows, out of which in the evenings there floated gay southern songs; for Rose and Reuben sat there instead of in the kitchen, the time-honored living-room of the rest of Middleboro.

Thus things went happily on until one day the wrath of God, or so it seemed to Samantha, fell upon them because of their lightsome way of living, and Reuben was brought home from his logging-camp—dead.

Their child was then only three years old, Samantha remembered, and with this thought she turned once more towards the bed where Dorothy lay sobbing.

"There, there!" she soothed, moved to pity

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in spite of her disapproval. "Don't cry so hard. Crying won't bring her back, nohow. Besides she's a sight better off in heaven."

"I hate heaven!" the child broke out, vehemently. "I hate it! And I hate the angels for taking Rosemother there!" flinging herself still farther down in among the pillows and giving way to a wilder passion of tears.

Samantha turned deadly pale and stood rooted to the spot. Would God, who is a stern and terrible God, strike her down for listening to such blasphemy, she wondered? "Oh, Lord, protect me, a poor sinner," she prayed half aloud, "and punish them that deserves it more; and Lord——," her tone became beseeching——

"Samantha, be you up there?" some one called, as two women came stumping noisily up the carpetless stairs.

"Well," said one, "as I was sayin', Samantha found her lying there stone dead in the settin' room last night when she run over to get some Jamaica ginger for her ma', who was having one of them bad turns of hers."

"Poor thing, the neighbors do say as how she danced herself into it, but——"

They reached the room, and seeing the child tossing and sobbing upon the bed, ceased talking.

"Oh Rosemother, Rosemother!" Cherub wailed, "Come back to me! Come back!"

"The poor lamb!" exclaimed the elder of the two women, "Poor little blessed lamb!" and tears of pity filled her kindly eyes as she hurried towards the bed.

"Mary Ann!" sternly commanded Samantha, stepping forward and blocking the way, "Don't touch that child! She is polluted with sin! She's blasphemed against the Lord!"

"Rosemother, Rosemother, I don't want you to be in heaven!" Cherub screamed hysterically.

"Poor little lamb!" almost sobbed Mary Ann, making her way to the bed in spite of Samantha and gathering the child to her breast.

"There, there, lamby, try not to cry so hard! There, there!" she soothed, rocking back and

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forth as the child nestled closer. "It was a poor little lonesome lamb! There, there!"

Cherub's warm arms found their way about the woman's neck, and the sobbing grew less and less as the little head, with its mass of dampened yellow curls, sank lower—and—lower.

"Now," Mary Ann whispered as the child, exhausted by her crying, fell asleep. "I guess as how I'd just better take her home with me whilst you get things all finished up downstairs, Samantha," and she made towards the door with Cherub in her arms.

"Mary Ann Wiggin!" exclaimed Samantha, "you don't mean to say you're going to take that child in amongst your own children, and her a blasphemer!"

"Yes," Mary Ann returned, "that's exactly what I do mean; and I only wish I could keep her, that's what!"

"Well I never——"

"And I would, too," Mary Ann interrupted hotly, "if I didn't know she had a grandpa down South that's her rightful owner."

The child stirred, caught her breath sob-

bingly, and her hold about the woman's neck tightened. Mrs. Wiggin brushed the curls back from her forehead, and kissed her softly.

"Yes, poor lamb," she murmured, "a grand-pa that don't care enough about you to have ever come to see you, and you having to go live with him now, most likely, when you just as well stay right here in New England where your pa grew, and grow up along with my birdies." Then turning to the two women she said, "I'll drive by the postoffice on my way home and telegraph Colonel Nelson."

Samantha nodded, and Mrs. Wiggin went slowly down the stairs and clambered carefully into a light farm wagon waiting at the gate, still clasping the child close in her arms.

She had been the mother's best friend, for her big heart had gone out to Rose, the transplanted southern flower, when she saw how bravely she was trying to hold up her head against the sorrow and hurts that had come to her in the North, and now she mothered Cherub as though she had been her own.



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Days passed slowly for Cherub at Mrs. Wiggin's farm: days that were full of sadness and mystery in spite of all the Wiggin children could do to help her; for she had seen her mother laid to rest in the peaceful old cemetery by the river.

She did not in the least understand it all. She did not see why her mother, so still and beautiful, could not sleep on in their flower-caressed home as she had done every night; but Mrs. Wiggin explained she must sleep in the arms of Mother Earth, so that she could be near Cherub's father who had waited there for her so long. And so there were two mounds now where there had been only one, just beneath the big oak tree where the river made a sudden companionable sweep inward, as though murmuring softly, "Sleep sweetly, for I am near." The old mound she knew was where her father slept, for had not she and Rosemother come down the winding path along the river bank each day during the summer to put flowers there for him?

But everything was so different now, different all through the dreary nights and the

puzzly, thinky, sad days. And it was to be even more different, for a man with sad eyes had just come up from the South to see her, and told them he had come to take Dorothy back to live with her grandfather on his plantation.

"But," Mrs. Wiggin said to him indignantly, after the first greetings were over, "why didn't Colonel Nelson come for her himself?"

The man smiled and answered only by handing her a note, patting Cherub's curls as he did so.

"Mrs. Wiggin, Honored Madam," she read aloud, as Cherub clung to her skirts and listened, "I thank you for your information concerning my daughter and her child. I am sending Mr. Parker for her; an honorable Southern gentleman, madam, born and raised in God's country. You will please arrange to send her back with him at once. Forty years ago, just after your countrymen had slain my father and my three brothers, devastated our home and taken my sword, I swore that I would never cross Mason and Dixon's line again so long as life lasted, and, God willing,

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I shall never break that sacred vow. I beg to tender my deepest respects and gratitude to you though, Madam, and to sign myself, your faithful servant, Lee Talliaferro Nelson."

"Well, I never!" exclaimed Mrs. Wiggin. "Forty years, and him——" then remembering the child's presence she closed her lips firmly for fear some criticism might escape her.

The sad-eyed man again smiled his sympathetic, crooked smile, saying, "Yes, I know what you are thinking. It *doesn't* seem possible after all these years that one could feel so bitterly as the Colonel does. But he is of the old stock, ma'am, bone and sinew, and he cannot forget as you and I can who have not suffered. As he told you, his father, his brothers, the home of his grandsires, his country, his all were sacrificed for the cause they, and he, believed to be right." He paused, then continued with a sigh: "It's easy to forget if you've won, but it comes pretty hard when you've *lost*! Even after it was all over, and the Colonel had grown older and married, he suffered, for his little son, his only son, was the victim of a carpet-bagger's riot. Then,

years afterward, his daughter married a 'Yankee' and left him for the North, thus causing an even sadder occurrence—about which I am not at liberty to tell you," he finished hurriedly.

"Yes, yes," Mrs. Wiggin responded, her sympathy at once enlisted on behalf of the fiery old southern soldier. "Yes, that was hard, and I'm sorry for him, that's what! But here, lamby," she interrupted herself, and stooping forward put her arms about Dorothy, who had been standing awed and silent, "I've got to get your things together, and—Land Sakes!" dabbing her eyes, "I've got just an hour to do it in!"

"Mary! Elizabeth!" she called to her two children standing on the porch outside, "come 'long up stairs and help me pack Dorothy's clothes."

She bustled from the room leaving Dorothy alone with the stranger, at whom she looked with childish wonder.

"Dorothy," he said, reaching out and drawing her towards him, "don't you want to go home with me?"

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She continued to look at him thoughtfully, but made no answer.

"Go home where I live and where your grandfather is?" he persuaded, smiling into her eyes.

She shook her head. "No," she said firmly.

"No?" he questioned. "Why not?"

"Because," and her mouth trembled as she tried not to cry, "I must walk down the wiggly path and take flowers to Rosemother every day." Then, seeing he was about to argue with her, she continued with a finality in her tone: "She needs me."

A deeper shade of sadness came quickly to the man's eyes, and he took her little face between his hands.

"Dorothy," he said, "she doesn't need you now. She has your father; but I need you. I have no one. And your grandfather needs you, so—won't you come and be our little girl?"

The appeal touched the child's heart as nothing else could have done.

"A really-truly grandfather, like Mary and Elizabeth's? And hasn't he any little girl down where he lives to love him?"

He shook his head.

Then putting her hand timidly upon his, Dorothy answered, "Yes"—hesitating for a name.

"Cousin Billy," he prompted.

"Cousin Billy," she repeated, "Yes—Cousin Billy, I'll come."

CHAPTER II

MRS. WIGGIN and the two girls soon had Dorothy's trunk packed, locked, and standing ready on the side porch. Mary and Elizabeth had been laughing and chatting so gaily all this time that Cherub had almost forgotten the weight of sorrow that hung over her, and, catching the excitement of the going-away spirit, ran hither and thither, her little face rosy with smiles, helping in every way she could.

Mr. Parker was sent to the barn to help the hired man hitch up, and soon they all were piling into the spring wagon which he had driven around to the front of the house.

"Here you, Mary," exclaimed her mother, who had just put the two other children into the back seat, while Mr. Parker strapped the trunk on behind, "run in and get that box of lunch! I declare I clean forgot it!"

Mary scampered into the house and Mrs. Wiggin climbed in and took up the reins.

"Now," she called, when in another minute Mary reappeared with the lunch box clasped in her arms, "get in with Dorothy and Elizabeth; and Mr. Parker, you please sit here by me. That's it!" as they all took their places. "Giddap, there!" and slapping the reins up and down upon the mare's back they started briskly towards the station.

The little girls wound their arms about one another and sat smiling out at the bright spring sunshine which kissed the budding trees and watched over the awakening fields. Suddenly the wagon turned a sharp curve of the road and Cherub, catching sight of the house where she and her mother had lived, began to cry.

"Why, what's the matter?" Elizabeth asked, surprised at the sudden outburst. "What's the matter?"

Mary seemed to understand at once, however, and, squeezing her hand, snuggled up close, saying, "Don't cry, Dorothy, your Cousin Billy says it's all full of roses where you're

going, and just think! You'll have a grandpa like ours and you won't be lonely any more. I wish I was going too, it's all so lovely!"

Dorothy dried her eyes and tried to smile as the house slipped from view behind the trees; but its flower-wreathed face with drawn shades, that looked to her like big eyelids closed in sleep, kept coming before her mind, and she felt a pain way down deep inside of her.

"Why, here we are at the depot already," exclaimed Elizabeth, as her mother drew up before a long wooden walk that ran out from the brick station.

Elizabeth and Mr. Parker hopped out of the wagon almost at the same instant, and he held up his arms for the two other girls, who jumped and were landed safely upon the platform.

"Now I'll run and buy the tickets, Dorothy. The train will be here in a minute," and he rushed away leaving the three children gazing about them, while Mrs. Wiggin herself got out and tied the mare to a hitching post.

The train came thundering in almost imme-

diately, and after much hugging and kissing and promising not to forget each other on the part of the children, and a farewell caress from Mrs. Wiggin, who allowed the tears to course unheeded down her cheeks, Dorothy boarded the train.

"Here's a seat right here, dear, next the window," Mr. Parker said, "where you can see Mary and Elizabeth," and placing the luggage in the rack overhead they sat down and looked through the window into the eager, smiling faces of the group outside. Just then Samantha Hard came down the platform and joined them, saying as she did so, "Well, she's off to Perdition sure enough now, I reckon, going down there to live with such folks!" And she gave a sigh of evil-to-come that seemed to give her pleasure.

The train started with a lurch, and Mrs. Wiggin could not help noticing how sad Dorothy's little face was, her nose pressed flat against the window-pane in her effort not to lose the last glimpse of the friends she had grown to love.

"I declare, Samanthy," Mrs. Wiggin ejacu-

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lated crossly, "I believe you'd be downright sorry if she didn't, that's what! There, children, wave your handkerchiefs!"

The train sped away from the little town, on and on through well-kept farmlands, then through forests of fir and pine where the lacy effect of the intermingling leaves of other trees lent to the whole a festive air; and then out into the open again, the scenes changing, quickly changing, as scenes change in a dream.

Dorothy continued to look from the window, fascinated by the kaleidoscopic view before her, and spoke only when the man by her side asked her a question. The little face was far too full of serious thought for one of her years, and Mr. Parker sighed as he looked at her and realized the possibility for suffering that displayed itself in her sensitive features. The sky that had all along been so blue suddenly darkened, and soon the rain began to splash against the window-pane. This, somehow, seemed to comfort rather than distress Dorothy, and turning she smiled up at him, as she pointed out of the window, "The sky's sad too; see, it's crying because Rosemother has gone."

"Oh, no," he answered cheerfully, trying to turn her thoughts into brighter channels, "it's not sad; it's glad because your mother is there now, in heaven. It has a spring cold, that's why its eyes are weeping."

She did not respond to his banter, but continued to watch the raindrops as they fell. Presently she asked, "Cousin Billy, what do you think heaven is like?"

The man gave an involuntary start at the unexpected question, and to gain time said, "You tell me what you think it's like."

"Well," she answered, "I told Samantha Hard that I hated it; but I don't any more—I guess—for I think it must be all full of mothers, and mothers, and mothers; beautiful Rosemothers like mine, with love jumping out of their eyes when they look at you, just like they were saying 'Boo'! And there are children, and children, and children, loving them all the time, and—mothers never have to go to sleep *there*," she ended plaintively. "But what do *you* think it's like?"

"I think," he said gravely, "that it's a place of absolute forgiveness"; for he could not help

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thinking of this child's bitter old grandfather, "and where," he continued, "every one loves, and is loved."

"You think then," Cherub asked thoughtfully, seemingly well pleased with his description, "that Grandfather loves Rosemother now that she's there?"

"Your grandfather always loved your mother," he answered, wondering how much the child knew.

"No," she said seriously, "he stopped loving her when she married Father, because he was a Yankee. That's why he never came to see us, for I heard Rosemother say so once. What's a Yankee, anyway?"

She waited a moment for his answer, but as it did not seem to be forthcoming she resumed eagerly, "Do you think I'll like to live at Nelson Hall, and that Grandfather will love me very much? Mary and Elizabeth's grandfather's such a loving man; I want mine to be just exactly like him, and love me lots, and lots, and lots; for," and she looked up at him wistfully, "I'm awfully used to being loved, you know. But you haven't told me

anything about him yet. What's he like, my grandfather?"

Mr. Parker fidgeted about uneasily, wanting to shift the conversation to a safer topic but hardly knowing how to do so.

"I've never seen him, you know," she continued, "and whenever I asked Rosemother about him and why he didn't come to see us she'd just hug me up close, and say that I'd understand all about it some day; that he was a brave, good man and that I must love him whatever happened. Then sometimes her eyes would begin to cry while her mouth kept smiling, but I'd always kiss 'em so hard that they would have to smile too," she concluded.

He looked down at her. Should he answer her questions? Should he tell this child of the terrible struggle between the North and South, and how bitter her grandfather had been ever since the day he saw General Lee surrender his sword? It had been so many years ago, why couldn't the Colonel bury it all as thousands of other southern men and women had done! And all the other sadness after that—her moth-

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er's marriage, and then—the other! Should he tell her all these things?

He looked once more into the little face beside him. Already it showed only too well its knowledge of sorrow, and, his heart crying out against the injustice of it all, he realized that he would never be able to tell Dorothy anything save things about happiness. Yet he knew that she must soon discover that her grandfather did not love her, for the very mention of her was apt to infuriate him. How could this be explained to an innocent little child? Well, perhaps, after all, the old man might change when he saw her, and then there need be no explanation. With this comforting thought he smiled and said, "Yes, Dorothy, I'm sure you'll like to live at Nelson Hall," and, playfully pinching her cheek, "Don't you think you can make *anyone* love you? Your mother was right, your grandfather is a good brave man——"

"Oh," she interrupted with a sigh of happiness, "then you do think he'll love me lots. I'm so glad! Now tell me about Nelson Hall."

"It's beautiful there. You'll think so, too,

I know, and your mother loved it so!" he answered.

"Then I will too," she said quickly, nodding her head emphatically; "I love everything Rosemother loves!"

The man's arm tightened about her, and he said suddenly, as though fearing if he did not speak quickly he would be unable to speak at all, "Dorothy, I loved your mother before she married your father. I loved her better than all the world, and I alone know, I think, how hard it was for her to leave Nelson Hall and go away with him. But, you see, she loved him very much and felt it was her duty to go."

"Yes, I know," the child said, only half comprehending, but feeling that he too was very sad.

"And she could not know," he continued, "what the consequences of her going would be."

She was gazing up at him wide-eyed and puzzled. He checked himself with an effort; then said, "Nelson Hall is a big white house set back in a grove of oak and magnolia trees. Yes, I know you'll love it," patting her hand.

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"The roses that your mother loved have climbed over its walls, and festooned themselves from the balconies. Her garden has crept up and looks through her window now, as though begging to come in and cheer things up."

"And can't some of the flowers go in?" she asked, excited. "I think that would be lovely! I have a clematis vine at home that has climbed across from the cedar tree right into my window, and the bluejay who lives there wakes me up every morning—at least he did," her voice faltered, . . . then trailed off sadly, "before Rosemother went to heaven."

"And there are lots of birds at Nelson Hall," he went on cheerfully, "robins, and blackbirds, and cardinals, and bluejays, and some of the pickaninnies have tame mocking-birds too."

"Pickaninnies!" the child caught at the word . wonderingly. "What are they?"

"The little colored children who live on the plantation at Nelson Hall. A plantation has lots of colored people, negroes, you know, to work the fields of cotton and corn."

"Oh, I shan't like pickaninnies and colored people," she quavered. "I think I'd almost

rather go back to where Samantha Hard lives!"

He laughed, then looked at her tenderly. "No child, I'm sure you wouldn't. Didn't your mother ever tell you about them? There were a great many she loved at Nelson Hall."

"No," she answered, "Rosemother couldn't talk very much about Nelson Hall, for it always made her cry."

"Well, you'll love them after you know them," he said, "especially Mammy Caroline and her husband. You are too much like your mother not to."

Like her mother! Oh, how happy that made her feel! She moved closer and slipped her hand in under his as it rested upon his knee.

"Did Rosemother love *all* the pickaninnies and colored people and negroes when she was a little girl like me?"

"Yes, Dorothy, she loved them very much."

"Then I will too, Cousin Billy, and I'm going to call you Cousin Billy-Bil; I always give love-names, you know," she explained; then smiling brightly up at him continued, "I'll love you too like she did, Cousin Billy-Bil."

"No, child," he exclaimed; "love me better."

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"All right," she agreed, and leaned her head heavily against his arm.

Pickaninnies, and colored people—roses and birds and big white houses—her mother smiling at her. She was fast asleep.

"If I could only keep you, dear little likeness of your mother," he whispered, fixing her head more comfortably against his shoulder.

CHAPTER III

It was a long, tiring journey from Maine to Alabama, the only break they made being a night spent in New York; but Cherub had enjoyed it, for everything was new to her. The big city with its myriad lights and finger-like church spires, mysteriously pointing, as she thought, to where her mother was; then as they sped southward, leaving behind them the cities of the North, the southern fields where dark women and children worked in the sunshine, laughing and singing, flashed by in quick succession. She was especially interested in the big-eyed pickaninnies who ran out and waved madly to them whenever they passed one of the funny little houses made of logs, where rambling roses and honeysuckle ran riot. Mr. Parker watched her closely, and with his funny tales and gentle ways successfully dissipated the gathering shadows when they threatened to cloud her little face; for the impulse to point

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out to her mother the many interesting things along the way continually reminded her of her sorrow.

But now after over two days of such traveling they were gathering their bundles together, for the next station would be theirs.

It had begun to rain again, and the train jerked along in a spasmodic sort of way, coughing and sneezing as if running along the wet rails had given it a cold.

"Nelsonville, Nelsonville!" announced the brakeman, flinging back the door and shouting so that he might be heard above the noise. "Nelsonville!"

"Well, here we are," Cousin Billy said, picking up the luggage, and he and Cherub made their way through the car and down the steps.

"Why, howdy Marse Willie, howdy sah! Welcome back, sah, same as usual, sah! Jes walk dis a'way, sah, as de tater-bug say to de ant."

Dorothy looked up and saw a little black, bow-legged man bowing and scraping as he spoke, his occasional teeth gleaming in a broad grin. Without further ado he grabbed their

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satchels, and, still grinning and muttering his jargon, disappeared around the corner of the low whitewashed waiting room just in front of them.

The child instinctively took a firmer hold on her cousin's hand and looked up at him fearfully. He did not notice the motion, however, nor if he had would he have understood, so he walked rapidly after the negro while Cherub trotted energetically to keep abreast of him.

So this was her new home, she thought as they turned the corner and walked towards a dilapidated landau; Nelsonville, the place her mother had loved! How dreary it looked now with no one in sight but her Cousin Billy and the black man! She tried to peer ahead through the gathering mist, but all she could see was a winding muddy road leading away, with the rain pouring down upon it making little shiny pools here and there as it fell. It made her heartsick and sad; she did not like it; but then if Rosemother had loved it, and she knew she had, she must try to love it too.

They reached the vehicle in silence; then Mr. Parker cried cheerily, "Here we are!

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Step right in, Dorothy, and we'll soon be at Nelson Hall."

The negro, with a bowing and bobbing of his head, opened the low door ceremoniously, repeating, "Step right in. Yas Ma'am, step right in. Molly an' Maud's fit as a fiddle, ma'am; git yer home in two shakes of deir tails, ma'am," and, chuckling, as the two travelers seated themselves, he climbed upon the box and gathered up his reins. "Cluck, cluck, git up dar!"

Molly and Maud looked around lazily, half cocked their ears, then shook their tails; but that was all, for the carriage stayed where it was.

He flopped the reins on their backs, and again clucked persuasively.

"Git up dar, I says. Git up!" but there was no answering motion save the slow and continued shaking of their tails.

"Good Lawd," he exploded, becoming exasperated. "I never see sich mulish hosses! Git up-p-p!" Then seeing that whip and reins were of no avail he half raised himself from his seat, and sticking one foot far out over the

dashboard gave first one and then the other a vigorous push forward. "I declar' I believe you'd have to be pushed into heaven," he said. "*Git up-p!*"

The push had the desired effect, and they began jogging indifferently up the road, while Uncle Cis settled himself back upon the box, holding the reins well out in front of him as though he were driving a lively team of nervous thoroughbreds.

"Humph," he muttered, "never see sich critters, a'actin' dis a'way when dar's a strange lady settin' back of deir tails too. Hey, git up dar," and he poked them again as they showed signs of slackening their pace. Thus admonished they continued lazily jogging, slashing in and out of mud-puddles as they went, while the passengers sat silently looking about them.

Uncle Cis's old gray livery with its brass buttons that had once shone as brightly as the Southern Cause, though now as dimmed, hung limply from his thin shoulders. He held himself with dignity, however, and kept his eyes fastened upon his team, determined that they

should not disgrace him by showing too much laziness before this stranger.

"Well, Dorothy," Mr. Parker remarked, breaking the silence, "this isn't a very welcoming evening for us, is it? But it's not much longer now, for see there," pointing ahead as he spoke, "see that house just beginning to peep at us through the trees at the top of the hill? That's where I live, and Nelson Hall is only about a mile farther on."

"Er, Marse Willie, sah, 'scuse me sah," the coachman suddenly said, whirling around towards them and jerking off his hat. "I mos' forgit to tell yer, sah, but Aunt Lucretia Jane been took bad wilst yer wuz away an' she say to tell yer ef yer wants to see her alive yer better come to her cabin to onc't, sah, yas sah."

"Why, Cicero!" exclaimed Mr. Parker, alarmed. "You ought to have told me sooner, instead of poking along like this. Here, kick up those snails of yours again. Hurry! The poor old soul!" Then turning to Dorothy he explained, "Aunt Lucretia's my old colored mammy. Best old woman that ever lived!

She's been taking care of me ever since I was born, and keeps house for me now. Hurry there, Cicero!"

"Yas sah, yas sah," responded the negro with alacrity, using every effort to urge the horses forward more quickly.

They drew rapidly nearer the house and Mr. Parker continued, "I'll have to leave you here, dear," and he began picking up his things. "I'm sorry," noticing the child's half clutch at his arm, "but I must go to Aunt Lucretia at once. You'd better go straight on to Nelson Hall."

"By myself?" quavered the child in quick alarm.

"Why no, dear, Uncle Cicero'll take you," and stooping he kissed her, then jumping from the carriage ran up the driveway.

"I'll see you soon, little one," he called back, and to the negro, "Take good care of your little mistress, Cicero, and don't let her get lonely." Then he entered his wide door, waving his hand to Cherub as he disappeared.

Uncle Cis once more gathered his reins to-

gether and, with a gentle but firm push, kicked his horses into action.

Dorothy, white-faced and frightened, crouched back into the corner of the landau. Oh, why had she been left all alone to drive along this scary, splashy road with only a black man for protection! He was so queer looking, with his fuzzy gray head and big eyes that rolled wildly around at her every few moments! She did not know that Uncle Cicero Cæsar Alexandria Nelson had been the guardian angel of several generations of little Nelsons, and as such was trusted by everyone in the county, so she sat trembling, wishing she was safely back in Maine with good Mrs. Wiggin and her children.

She was not the only person who was frightened, however, for Uncle Cis, who had been and still was as loyal a Rebel as any other of the southern gentry, held his own ideas of Yankees even if they were only children. He had never gotten over the fright the Yankees had given him when, as his young Colonel's bodyguard, they had threatened to shoot him if he did not show them where his master was

hiding. It's true they had not carried out their threat because the Colonel, overhearing, had come out and given himself up to save his faithful slave. But Cicero was still scared of Yankees, and the childish fear that this one, this Yankee girl back of him, might try to harm him took possession of his mind.

"Lawdy," he muttered, "I'd ruther *face de* Jedgemint gate dan have my back agin it!"

These words reaching Dorothy only as a threatening murmur made her clasp her hands more tightly together than ever, and give herself up to an agony of fear.

The horses plodded on, and the rain dripped down more and more mournfully. The big trees on each side of the road, draped with festoons of gray moss, seemed to the overwrought mind of the child to crowd forward threateningly, reaching out for her with their mighty arms. They drove on through what seemed like an endless forest of them where the air became stifling; then, just as she felt she could not bear it another second, a light came twinkling from out the misty gloom.

Uncle Cis sighed with relief.

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"Dar's de star o' Bethlehem, Missy," he ejaculated, grinning around at her as with one hand he pointed to the light that Dorothy could see shone from a window just ahead.

"Is it Nelson Hall?" she asked timidly.

"Yassum, it are. Yer's encroachin' de place whar all de Nelsons dat's wuth it was borned," he said, grandiloquently. "You'll soon put yer foots on de turrible firmiment o' Gawd's Country, as I'se often heard Ole Marse say, fer dar," pointing to the entrance, "am de hospital potals of Alabama's riskycrack!"

Cherub leaned forward, forgetting her fear in her eager effort to see the house that her mother had loved so well, and Uncle Cis, now that he was nearly home and quite safe, began to feel the prickings of his conscience. Hadn't Marse Willie told him not to let his little mistress get lonely, and he had not said one word to her during the whole of their lonely drive together! He would make up for it now, however, he promised himself, and he smiled into her eyes.

"Yas, Missy, dat's Nelson Hall;" and then in

a softer cadence, "de place whar yer ma come from, honey."

With these words a wave of pity and love flooded his loyal old heart, and he again looked around at the strained little white face. "Little Mis' Rosey," he whispered prayerfully, "Little Mis' Rosey, I'll be good to yo' po' little gal;" then aloud, "Heah we is, Missy! Who-a-a, Maud! Whoa, Molly! Who-a-a dar!"

They stopped before the big white house surrounded by great oaks and magnolia trees. The columns across the front seemed to Dorothy's eyes to reach almost to the sky, they were so tall. And the roses, Rosemother's roses, the ones her Cousin Billy had told her about, were climbing and clinging to them by the millions, but their heads were bowed as if in sorrow while the rain drops fell from them like tears.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "Oh, it's beautiful; but," pointing to the roses as a lump arose in her throat, "they're all so sad!"

"Yassum," assented Uncle Cis, "but you'se come to make 'em glad." And getting stiffly

down from his seat he helped her from the landau with much manner, and opened the big green painted door of Nelson Hall.

She entered and looked about her expectantly, thinking each moment that her grandfather would come forward and hug her up, just as Mary and Elizabeth's grandfather used to do them. But no one came. Uncle Cis hobbled back to the carriage to get her luggage, and she stood all alone, a pathetic little figure in the big square hall.

Feeling more lonely than ever she was relieved to see the front door open again and Uncle Cis re-enter.

"Where's my grandfather?" she asked, "I want to see him."

He hesitated, looked distressed, then haltingly said, "Well-er-now, Missy, I doan zackly know, no ma'am, I doan zackly know, but," gathering assurance as he proceeded, "he'll sholy be heah to welcome yer putty soon, yas ma'am, he'll sholy be heah, an' in de meantime," bowing like a cavalier, "I welcomes yer, honey, leetle daughter o' yer ma, *I* welcomes yer home!"

His voice broke and he turned away to hide his emotion from the wondering eyes of the child. He knew perfectly well all the bitterness that his old Colonel bore this girl; he knew that he would not come to welcome her soon or at any time, but his sympathetic heart would not let him tell her so, and having once pledged himself to be good to her, he would tell any lie to keep that pledge.

"Yassum," he again repeated, "he'll sholy come soon now."

A door opened noisily in the back of the hall, and a big chocolate-colored woman came waddling hurriedly towards them.

"Lawdy!" she ejaculated, "ef it ain't my Little Miss! Mis' Rosey's baby gal!" and reaching Cherub she promptly threw herself on her knees, gathering her into her arms.

"Honey, honey," she almost sobbed, rocking back and forth until Dorothy could hardly keep her footing, "welcome home, welcome home! Mammy sho is glad to git yer, Mis' Rosey's little gal! Dese arms is been an achin' avoid-ance ever since *she* lef' em, honey. Welcome home, welcome home!"

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She was fairly crooning the words, still rocking rhythmically back and forth, the child held tightly in her embrace.

"Even ef dis am a sad an' mournful worl' yer finds *one* heart het up fer yer, honey, yas yer does!"

Dorothy was completely bewildered. She had never seen a negro until she started south with Mr. Parker three days before, and so she could not help feeling a little afraid of them, and found herself involuntarily shrinking away from the arms that now enfolded her. But this queer old woman with such a wealth of love ready and waiting for her had evidently loved her mother too, and with this thought Mr. Parker's words returned to her: "Your mother loved them very much, especially Mammy Caroline and her husband."

She looked into the woman's eyes that were on a level with her own, and asked, "Are you Mammy Caroline?" and indicating Uncle Cis who stood smiling down upon them, "Is that your husband?"

"Why, yes, Missy, why yes, honey-chile," she answered delightedly, "How you know?"

"Then I'll love you even if you are black," Dorothy said, laying her hand upon Mammy's, "because Rosemother loves you, and I love everybody Rosemother loves!"

"Blessed chile," the woman said softly, with strange reverence in her voice, and bending she kissed the little pink hand where it lay.

"And I'll call you," hesitating thoughtfully a moment . . . "Mammyline for a love-name, too,—'cause I always give love-names, you know."

Just then the front door was flung open and a little woman, hardly larger than a child, was fairly blown into the hall by the force of the driving storm. She stood motionless for a moment, seemingly dazed; then without showing any sign of having seen the group before her swiftly crossed in front of them and hurried silently into the long, dim parlors beyond, the water dripping from her rain-soaked gray garments leaving a trail behind her.

"Lawdy!" exclaimed Uncle Cis, breaking the breathless silence, and he hurried after her while Mammy Caroline gazed blankly at the open door.

"Who was that?" Dorothy whispered quickly, shivering and drawing nearer her.

"Law, chile," she said evasively, "doan yer be skeered; but dar—jes look at dat front do' standin' wide open wid de wind a'blowin' in heah hard 'nough to give us bof ammonial!" and she hurried forward to shut out the storm. "But mussy-on-us," she resumed, "yer mus' come to yo' room, Little Miss, an' git shet of dem Cinderella cloes yer got on."

"But who was that little lady?" the child persisted, as Mammy Caroline led the way up the broad white stairs and on past gloomy rooms until she stopped at the door of a lighted one, "and why didn't she speak to any of us, or say something?"

"Here am yo' department," the woman announced, still ignoring her question, "so won't yer walk in, as Marse Spider say to de fly?"

Dorothy obeyed and found herself in a large room with big windows on three sides of it. Against the fourth side stood the biggest bed she had ever seen, with four tall posts that reached to the ceiling. It, as well as the rest of the furniture, she thought looked as though

it had been made for the Brobdingnags, and it made her feel very small and lonely as she stood in its midst looking about her.

Uncle Cis entered with her satchel, and Mammy Caroline began helping her change her dress, rambling on as she unbuttoned and buttoned, "Yassum, yer mus' git shet of all dese heah dirty cloes, an' make a 'tractive disappearance fer yer grandpaw. He's 'bout de mos' particlerest genman ever deceived by woman, an' yer know——"

"But when is he coming?" she interrupted impatiently, "I want to see him! I want him to jump me up, so," she gesticulated with her arms excitedly, "and then he must love me, and love me and love me, because," and she looked into the kindly dark face wistfully, "I'm awfully used to being loved, you know, that is —before Rosemother went to heaven."

The banging of a door somewhere far down the hall recalled to her her unanswered question of a few minutes before, and once again she demanded an explanation of the strange scene that had occurred below.

"Mammyline, you haven't told me yet who that queer old lady was. Who was she?"

Mammy Caroline pretended not to understand. "What queer ole lady, honey? I ain't seen no queer ole lady!"

"That little one downstairs," Dorothy answered.

"Oh, her; why doan yer worry 'bout her, baby-chile. She jes Mis' Hant, dat's all she is! But hurry now an' git into yo' dress."

"But who's Miss Hant?" the child persisted, "and why"—but she stopped short on the word, for in the doorway she saw a man's tall figure silhouetted against the sky that showed through the window beyond.

With a glad leap of her heart she knew at once that it was her grandfather, a nice tall gray grandfather just like Mary and Elizabeth's; and with a half timid but wholly happy gesture she broke away from Mammy Caroline's buttoning hands and stepped towards him.

"Caroline!" he thundered, his voice jarring through the room causing Cherub's heart to stop beating for a moment, "what do you mean

by disobeying my orders and talking to this child? Hey! What do you mean by it, I'd like to know?"

"Law Marse, I ain't."

Ignoring Dorothy completely he started towards the woman threateningly. "Don't answer me back!" he flared. "You have been talking or——"

"I declar', sah——"

"Don't answer me back, I say!"

"But, Marse——"

"I wouldn't have heard that nick-name that you know you're forbidden to use if you——"

"But sah——"

"Silence! Didn't I tell you not to answer back?" he bellowed, coming a step nearer.

"Yassuh, yassuh," she muttered, backing away, half curtsying, "but I never answers back, sah."

A spark of amusement flashed for a moment in Colonel Nelson's eyes at her words, but as quickly died out, and in its place flared a hatred of all the child stood for as he caught sight of her once more.

"Well, mind what I've told you," he con-

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tinued to Mammy; "she's to be told *nothing*; understand? See nothing, hear nothing, or I'll——"

"Yassuh, yassuh," agreed the woman eagerly.

"Nor is she to go near the house in the garden. You are to see that she doesn't."

"Yassuh, yassuh."

"And you," he turned to Cherub, "are not to ask questions, or pry into things! You are here because there is nothing else to do with you," he added hastily, "for I would not willingly entertain a Yankee under this roof, so help me God! I am now, as I was forty years ago, ma'am," he went on pompously, "a loyal Confederate soldier, and, God willing, I shall yet live to see another war and victory for our brave boys in gray!"

His proud old head with its bushy gray locks was thrown back, his black eyes were dilated, and he gazed afar off as if he saw a victorious army marching towards him.

Dorothy, although frightened, and hurt more than most children of her age would have been, felt a thrill of fascination as she contin-

ued to gaze at him. She did not in the least understand his words, for she had never even heard of a war, nor did she know what a Yankee was. What did it all mean, anyway, she wondered?

Then an answer came rushing through her mind. Why of course that was it; it was all some game that her grandfather was playing with her, just like Mary and Elizabeth's grandfather used to play with them. He would jump at them, snarling and growling like a bear, and then when they scampered away, squealing, he'd call, "Oh, 'fraid cat, little girls, 'fraid cat!" until they came back and got kissed. So, laughing quickly, she ran to the old Colonel and looking up into his face said, "I'm not a 'fraid cat now, Grandfather!"

Colonel Nelson gasped, his far-away look melted, and he seemed about to gather her in his arms; when suddenly he saw in her face the reflected face of her dead mother. Like a flame of fire the realization of who and what she was swept over him again, and turning

from her he said to Mammy Caroline, "For God's sake, never let me see this child again!" and was gone from the room.

Dorothy stood motionless, her eyes fixed blankly upon the door where her grandfather had been a minute before. Her companion too was silent for once, awed and confused; then catching sight of the stricken baby face her heart cried out against the hardness of her old Marse, and she felt bitterness against a Nelson for the first time in her life.

"Gawd o' mercy!" she cried. "Dey'll kill my chile! Dar, dar, darlin'," and she sat down on the floor at the child's feet. "Mammy lubs yer, anyhow, an' she ain't eber gwine to let nothin' hurt yer. No, darlin', no."

She had expected Dorothy to burst into tears, but instead she lay against her still and quiet for a moment, then struggling free stood up straight and looked at the woman strangely.

"I hate him! I hate him!"

"Lawd, baby chile!" Mammy exclaimed, completely taken aback. "Sh-sh, sh-sh. Doan talk like dat. He yo' gran'paw!"

“He’s not my grandpa!” the child announced. “He’s not anybody’s grandpa! He *isn’t* a grandpa at all, and I hate him!” Then she threw herself sobbing on Mammy Caroline’s breast.

CHAPTER IV

CHERUB had not been at Nelson Hall very long before she began to love it, in spite of her grandfather's cruel reception. Her room did not seem too big or full of dark forebodings now, as it had on the night after her arrival, for Mammy Caroline had told her that it had been her mother's when she was a little girl, and after that it had become peopled for Dorothy with little girl Rosemothers who peeped out at her from every corner.

The roses, too, looked in at the windows just as her Cousin Billy had told her they would, and were no longer tearful, pleading roses, for they had begun growing right into the room, bobbing their heads merrily as they crept in and cheered things up. Dorothy opened the pinky baby buds each morning with a kiss and whispered little loving words to them, for, as she confided to the old negress who watched over her so lovingly, she believed they were lit-

the heaven telephones that carried her love-messages straight up to Rosemother.

Above the big old fireplace hung a portrait of Rose Douglas when she was a little girl that smiled down now at her daughter, continually seeming to say, as she had so often heard her grown-up Rosemother say, "We must be happy, Cherub, for the world is made for happiness."

And it had begun to seem full of happiness again to Cherub, for Mr. Parker came to see her every day, and they took long walks together among the flowers in the old gardens, out through softly gossiping woods, and on into the fields where singing black people greeted her with broader and broader smiles each day that she went and watched them at their work, and Cherub began to feel such an interest in it all that she realized the world could never be a very lonesome place for her, even if her Rosemother did not live in it.

Mammy Caroline had become a happiness, too. Dorothy found her arms ever waiting, and her heart ever ready to give her the love and sympathy she needed; for, as she herself

said, she was a "reg'lar love incubator a'hatch-in' out mo' love all de time"; and this love so freely given had become a necessity now to the sensitive little girl from New England, and every day when she awoke she felt happier because of it and of seeing Mammy Caroline's moon-beaming face smiling down at her.

One morning, after she had been living at Nelson Hall for several weeks, she was awakened as usual in this manner, and scrambling out of bed, dressed and was soon out in the dewy grove where the birds and squirrels had learned to come to her for their breakfast.

As she sat beneath a big magnolia, surrounded by her half-tamed pets, she suddenly heard a rustling noise back of her, and turning quickly she saw two round eyes looking at her over the high, white-washed fence. They were very big and earnest, and as she returned their gaze the rest of the face belonging to the eyes rose above the fence and smiled at her companionably.

"Are you Colonel Nelson's little girl?" its owner asked.

Dorothy's face had lit up with a responsive

smile of welcome at the sight of the child, but the question as quickly brought a frown, and she answered crossly, "No, I'm my own little girl, and Rosemother's!" Then, "Who are you?"

"I'm Lella Byrd Lawson, and I live there," pointing across to a clump of trees from which a chimney stretched its neck in an effort to see the outside world.

"That's Byrd Nest, my Aunt Laura's house, and me and Mother live with her 'cause I haven't got a father any more."

"I haven't any father either," Cherub answered, drawing nearer, "and Rosemother's in heaven. Is your father in heaven?"

"No, he's probably gone to the dogs," the newcomer announced pleasantly.

Cherub looked puzzled at this bit of information, so Lella Byrd continued, "That's what I heard Aunt Laura say to Billy the other day. Billy is Mr. Parker," she explained.

"Yes," Cherub answered. "He's my Cousin Billy, but I call him Cousin Billy-Bil for a love-name. I always give everybody I love a love-name, you know."

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"Well, what's your name?" questioned Lella Byrd.

"My name's Dorothy Douglas, but you can call me Cherub, because that's *my* love-name and I like you."

"All right," Lella Byrd agreed. "Would you like for me to skin over?" and without waiting for an answer she began clambering over the fence.

"Here you, Rochellesalts!" she exclaimed, kicking wildly as her foot was suddenly arrested by something ~~at~~ the other side. "Turn loose!"

"I ain't gwiner!" a voice muttered sullenly. "I'se tired bein' yo' captive an' I wants to see Marse Nelson's gal mysef," and a woolly head appeared back of hers.

"Why, who's that?" Cherub asked, surprised.

"Oh, just my captive," Lella Byrd announced calmly, looking with contempt at the small negro boy below her. "I'd just told him I was going to cut his head off, when I saw you coming into the grove."

"I'se Rochellesalts Paregoric Johnson," announced the tiny lad. "Mammy name me fer

de two bottles dat he'ped her when I wuz borned, an' I'se tired of always bein' a captive."

"Well, you can quit being then," broke in Lella Byrd magnanimously; "I'm tired too," and she dropped from the fence-top to Cherub's side, commanding the boy to do the same.

The children surveyed each other critically, seeming well pleased with what they saw. Lella Byrd, slim and straight as an Indian, with large eyes and sun-kissed cheeks, appealed to fair little Cherub as no child had ever done before, and drawing closer she said, "Oh, I like you! You look, you look——" she hesitated, struggling for words in which to express her admiration.

"A sight as usual!" Lella Byrd put in breezily. "But when I'm grown I'll comb my hair, and wash where it don't show, and do all the things Mother wants me to. Now I haven't time. How do you like this grove?" She spoke breathlessly, looking with eagerness about her. "First time me and Rochellesalts have ever been here, ain't it, Ro?" she continued, patro-

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nizingly, to the released captive. His eyes were rolling, his small face divided by a very big smile.

"Yassum, hit sho' is," he answered.

"We've often thought of coming, but we've been just a lee-tle bit scared; haven't we, Ro?" These words were electrical in their effect upon the boy. His face suddenly became grave and terror-stricken. He backed nearer to the fence, muttering and mumbling.

"Oh, don't be scared, nigger, now we're here!" Lella Byrd exclaimed angrily. "Use your rabbit's foot!" and reaching out she took hold of a string that hung about his neck and rubbed the object that hung from it over his face, chanting, in a high-pitched tone, as she did so,

*"Nary ketch a watch,
Nary ketch a witch,
Nary ketch a witchy-watch,
Nary ketch a witch."*

Cherub looked on, completely nonplussed.

Lella Byrd having finished the invocation upon him proceeded to go through it again

upon herself, after which she said in a matter-of-fact tone, "Cherub, you'd better be charmed too, I reckon."

"But what is it?" Cherub asked puzzled. "What are you doing?"

Lella Byrd looked at her scornfully a moment, then asked, "Why, don't you know? I'm charming us against hants. This place is chuck full of 'em!" and she began at once to rub Cherub's face, repeating the chant.

"But what is it?" Cherub persisted when she could speak. "I don't understand. What are hants, and what's that thing?" indicating the rabbit foot.

"It's the left hind foot of a graveyard rabbit that was caught crossing a murderer's grave at the full of the moon on a Friday, a thirteenth," Lella Byrd answered, "and you got to use it if you want to keep away hants and evil spirits and things!"

Rochellesalt's eyes rolled wildly and he rubbed his face; then stooping made a cross on each of his bare black feet, muttering, "Yassum, ef yer wanter keep hants 'way, you'se got to use it!"

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"We don't want Mis' Hant' to get us," Lella Byrd resumed, pointing past the grove to a little house at the far end of the garden beyond.

Cherub's curiosity reached the boiling point at this reference to Mis' Hant, for she had never ceased to wonder about the silent little figure which she had seen the night of her arrival.

"Mis' Hant!" she gasped excitedly. "Oh, tell me about her, quick, quick! Who is she? Tell me! Does she live there? I didn't know."

"Most people don't," the other announced condescendingly, flattered and gratified by Dorothy's show of interest. "But come on, let's go nearer," and catching her by the hand she ran out of the grove and down the garden-path, pulling Dorothy along, unresisting, toward the house beyond.

"We may see some of the spirits that hant her," Lella Byrd panted as they ran. "You see *I* know a great deal because I was born with a veil over my face, and besides that my Mammy rubbed my head with hog-eye lard at

sun-up when I was seven days old, so *I* can see spirits and things."

"Yassum, she know grea-deal," echoed Rochellesalts, his skinny bow legs struggling to keep up. "Mammy say her gwine be a hoo-doo doctor when her grow up jes like she are."

"But who's Mis' Hant?" Dorothy urged. "Tell me about her."

Well, she acts just like the hants do, and she's a lady that's sorry all the time and cries," Lella Byrd answered, still running. "I don't know why she's sorry, but she is. Maybe it's because the evil spirits stay 'round and hoo-doo her, I don't know, but anyhow she is hoo-dooed, for Mammy says so. That's the reason she wanders about like the hants. But there, there she is!" and Lella Byrd stopped so abruptly as they came to the hedge surrounding the little house that Rochellesalts, who was panting along behind, tumbled over her and fell crashing into the bushes.

"Sh-sh-sh——," admonished Lella Byrd, dropping down and pulling Cherub after her,

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"don't let her hear you!" and she crouched still lower.

Her warning came too late, however, for the sad-faced little lady, who had been sitting quietly before their advent, rose quickly, alarmed by the near-by noise, and looking about walked towards them.

The huddled children scarcely breathed as they saw her come closer, her eyes roaming along the hedge. Cherub caught her breath as Lella Byrd clutched wildly at her; then, just as Rochellesalts's feet began to itch so he thought he must surely run away, the little lady turned, retraced her steps, and sank into her chair again, burying her face in her hands.

"He's taken her away," she moaned. "He's taken my baby away. Little Rose, little Rose, he's taken you away, and I cannot find you."

"Lawsy!" muttered Rochellesalts, "I'se skeered, 'fo' Gawd I is!" and he began to squirm and wriggle.

"Shut up!" Lella Byrd whispered cautiously. "If you make a fuss I'll tell the headless dog that lives in the mill-pond to get you!"



This threat was sufficient, and the pickaninny lay quiet once more.

Dorothy moved, half rose, hesitated an instant—then stood up. She too was frightened and afraid of Mis' Hant, but in her veins there ran a strain of good old New England blood that compelled her to face Duty when she saw it, no matter what the cost might be; so now she stepped forward bravely.

"Give me your rabbit's foot," she demanded of the boy.

He, wide-eyed with terror, obeyed in silence.

"You say the evil spirits hoo-doo Mis' Hant?" she asked thoughtfully. "Then I'll charm her like you've charmed me so they can't," and she pushed her way through an opening in the hedge and walked, rather timidly, over to the sad little figure.

Lella Byrd, who was as superstitious as her old black Mammy in spite of all her mother and aunt could say, groaned with horror as she saw Cherub reach Mis' Hant, gently draw her hands from her face and apply the rabbit's foot, chanting as she did so.

The little woman gave a gasp of surprise,

and Dorothy, having completed the ceremony, smiled into her startled eyes, saying, "So, the evil spirits can't hoo-doo you any more, Sorry-lady, and I'm glad!"

"*Rose!*" Mis' Hant exclaimed, gazing at the child with joyous recognition. "Rose! My little Rose!" and she clasped the astonished child to her breast, almost smothering her with kisses.

Lella Byrd and her companion, seeing her thus gathered up and entirely misunderstanding the cause, with one accord rushed off, panic-stricken, across the garden, through the grove, and clambered back over the fence beyond.

"Lawdy," the boy ejaculated breathlessly. "Mis' Hant's got her fer sho'!"

"Yes," replied Lella Byrd in a voice of self-reproach, "I'm 'fraid, Ro', she's a dead-gone goner."

After the first flash of astonishment was over Cherub felt frightened as she found herself held so closely, for Lella Byrd's weird tales had taken a hold upon her which she could not at once throw off, and so she struggled wildly for a moment trying to free her-

self; and Mis' Hant becoming conscious of her effort loosened her arms, and said anxiously, "Why, Rose, aren't you glad to see me, dear? Don't you like to be cuddled any more?"

At the sound of her low voice something warm and tender seemed to enter Cherub's heart and kill all the fear she had felt for this stranger, and a great sympathy came in its place. She ceased her struggles, and looked into the face above her. There was something sweet and familiar about it, and somehow she felt strangely comforted and happy.

"My name's Dorothy, not Rose," she said gently. "Rosemother was named Rose, but I'm Dorothy—Dorothy Douglas."

"No, no; *Rose*," the woman repeated firmly, frowning a little. "Your father *wanted* me to name you for myself, I remember," and she smiled, "but I wanted to name you Rose; Rose is such a pretty name; and then you know," bending closer to Dorothy as though in great confidence, "all the roses that were peeping in at the windows when the angels brought you to me promised to be your God-mothers if I'd name you for them. Roses mean love and hap-

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piness, dear, and I wanted you to have all of both that was possible."

Dorothy felt more and more puzzled at every word:

"But my name is Dorothy," she reiterated, "and you never saw me before to-day, did you?" She was worried. "I'm really quite sure my name's Dorothy Douglas, you know."

"No," Mis' Hant said, shaking her head until the little gray curls about her face bobbed merrily, "your name's Rose Nelson, sweet, for I named you so myself."

Dorothy could not understand, and began to feel distressed as she stood mutely for a while, wondering what she could say to convince this Sorrylady of her evident mistake.

"But my name *is* Dorothy," she again explained, as that seemed to her the only way. "Rosemother's name was Rose Nelson till she married Father, then it was Rose Nelson Douglas, because she told me so once."

The Sorrylady still shook her head and smiled into Dorothy's eyes, but in spite of this her face assumed a troubled expression, and she pressed her hands to her head and sighed.

Dorothy stood very still looking at her and thinking. It was very hard to make a person understand when the evil spirits had hoo-dooed her, she decided, recalling what Lella Byrd had told her. But it seemed important somehow that she should be known by her right name. So she began again, "My name is Dorothy——" then seeing the woman's sad face become more troubled, she conceded, "but you can call me Cherub, for that's my love name. Rosemother called me that, and you can too, because I love you. My name's Dorothy, though," she finished positively, still hoping to convince her.

Mis' Hant shook her head. "It's strange you should think you were named for me," she murmured, looking at the child with a puzzled expression, "for I named you for the roses."

At that moment a shrill whistle pierced the air, and looking up they both saw Colonel Nelson's tall figure coming towards them from across the garden, his dogs bounding out from behind the big house and leaping about him as they heard his summons.

With a low cry the little lady rose, flinging

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her white hands over her face, and mourned, "Oh, it's only a dream again, he'll take her from me, forever, forever!" and ran into the little house, banging the door.

Dorothy, bewildered, stood rooted to the spot.

The Colonel came on across the garden, and as Dorothy watched him the fear that the Sorrylady had shown a second before communicated itself to her and she jumped behind the nearest tree. The noise she made but served to attract his attention, however, and striding through the hedge he called, "Who's there?"

Dorothy could not answer, nor move, but his quick eye saw the white of her dress as an idle breeze, wandering about seemingly bent on mischief, caught and fluttered it forward, and he stepped around and discovered her standing there, white and frightened.

For an instant he looked blankly, then recognizing her his face turned almost black with anger, for he believed her to be hiding because she knew that she was in a forbidden place. He seemed to fairly choke with rage as, with an effort to control his voice, he said, "How

dared you disobey me? Hey? How dared you come here, girl?"

The passion of hatred that Dorothy had felt against him on that first night at Nelson Hall revived at these words and flooded her whole being with a fury that she herself did not understand. Without a moment's hesitation she stepped out, her little head thrown back defiantly, her eyes flashing straight into his.

"I came," she said, "to charm the evil spirits away from *her*," and she pointed to the little house. "And I'm glad I came too, because I love her and *I hate you!* Yes, I hate you!" she repeated passionately, "for you're not anybody's grandfather: You aren't a grandfather at all, and I *hate, hate, hate* you!" then rushing past him she ran out through the hedge on towards the big house, never looking behind her.

The Colonel stood aghast, too surprised at the girl's sudden onslaught to move, but presently a slow, grim smile played across his face, and he murmured. "By Jove!" The little vixen! Who would have thought she had the

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Nelson spirit like that! By Gad! She's not *all* Yankee!" and he gazed after the little fleeing figure almost proudly. His face clouded in a moment more, however, as he looked up and saw a pale face with caressing gray curls peeping fearfully from a window in the little house. A sob arose in his throat and turning he walked slowly away.

"Dolly, Dolly," he murmured brokenly, "I *cannot* forgive when you've been hurt so!" and he bowed his head sorrowfully.

CHAPTER V

CHERUB walked down the steps, looked defiantly in the direction of her grandfather's window for an instant, then scampered swiftly into the grove and ran straight to the magnolia tree just as the sun rose and made it point shadow fingers toward the place where, a few days before, she had made the acquaintance of Lella Byrd.

Cherub was lonely.

For days after her encounter with her grandfather she had persisted in going near the hedge in hopes of seeing the Sorrylady, but it seemed as if she were never going to come out again and sit on her little latticed porch. Each day down by the magnolia she had gazed long at the fence, expecting momentarily to see Lella Byrd's brown eyes peering at her over the top. In this too she was disappointed. Once more she scanned the fence top, but those pointing shadows seemed to mock her, for this

morning, like the rest, there was only a squirrel there who jumped down and whisked to her for his breakfast. So after attending to his needs, and those of the other little half-wild creatures that had learned to know her, feeling quite forlorn she started towards the hedge again, craving human companionship. Just then she heard a queer scraping noise back of her, and turning spied Ro's kinky head rising above the fence. Recognizing it, she ran back, calling gladly, "Hello, Ro! Where's Lella Byrd?"

The head came cautiously higher until a scared face was visible.

"Where's Lella Byrd, Ro?" Cherub repeated. "Where is she?" as the boy remained silent. "I want to see her."

Rochellesalts, weak with fright, made no answer but clung, monkey-like, to the fence with one hand, while with the other he pointed towards a clump of bushes for a second, then letting go dropped out of sight.

Cherub, utterly surprised by this strange behavior, climbed hurriedly onto a bench that stood near her and looked over. Rochellesalts

was running away as fast as he could, while from the bushes to which he had silently pointed she saw Lella Byrd beckoning to her wildly.

Cherub nodded her head to signify that she understood, and jumping down dragged the bench nearer the fence and with its help had just reached the top and begun climbing over, when Lella Byrd's shrill voice caused her to pause.

"Hey there! Don't get over that way! Stop! Stop!" she screamed.

"Why?" Cherub screamed back.

"'Cause it's bad luck! Put your right foot first, and spit in the tracks of your left."

Cherub obeyed and started her descent on the other side, when she was again interrupted.

"Don't come yet. Wait! and I'll charm you better."

Cherub waited, and saw the boy reach Lella Byrd, who immediately began talking to him persuasively, offering him something she held in her hand. He shook his head stubbornly and backed away. Then, tiring of her constrained position, and also unwilling to curb

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her curiosity any longer, Cherub jumped lightly down and ran forward.

"Here, you! Throw a stone over your shoulder before you come any farther!" Lella Byrd yelled excitedly.

"Yassum, th'ow a stone, th'ow a stone!" Rochellesalts echoed in a high treble, and both children danced up and down motioning her to stop.

For a moment Cherub hesitated, then without obeying came on at full speed until she crashed into the bushes, and stood laughing in front of them.

"Why didn't you do as I told you?" Lella Byrd asked. "Ain't you scared of *nothing*?"

"Why, no," Dorothy answered. "You charmed me, didn't you? So I don't need to be. Why?"

"Ain't skeered o' nothin'!" Rochellesalts ejaculated, rolling his eyes. "Ain't yer skeered o' *nothin*'? Lawdy!" and he gazed at her in amazement.

"Well, you better be," warned Lella Byrd, rubbing herself, and then Ro, with the ever-present rabbit's foot, "for this is about the

hantedest place in the county. What did she do to you, anyhow?"

"Do?" Cherub questioned, puzzled. "Who? What are you talking about?"

"Mis' Hant," Lella Byrd answered impatiently. "Me and Ro thought——"

"Oh, Gawd, here come de Debil!" Rochelle-salts interrupted, turning ashy with fright and crouching back into the bushes. The other two gave a scared glance in the direction he had indicated, and Lella Byrd dropped on her stomach and pulled the bushes close about her, while Cherub stood still, too bewildered to move.

A figure in a long white garment, carrying a bag and a three-pronged garden fork, passed by.

Cherub watched for several seconds before she recognized him, then laughing outright she exclaimed with relief, "Why, it's Uncle Cis!"

The others uncovered their faces, and though still unconvinced were too curious to remain hidden any longer, so raised themselves stealthily, and peeped out at the hurrying man.

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"It does look like Uncle Cis," Lella Byrd acknowledged, chagrined; then turning on the pickaninny said threateningly, "What did you tell me it was the devil for, Ro? You better look out how you fool *me*; I'll hoo-doo you!"

"Law', Lel' Byrd, I didn't fool yer," he stated. "Uncle Cis sho' look an' act like de Debil."

Uncle Cis by now had crossed the field in which they were hidden, and having entered the one beyond immediately lay down flat in a freshly plowed furrow between two mound-rows of turned up earth.

"Why, what in the world is he doing?" Cherub asked, turning to Lella Byrd, who seemed as puzzled as she.

Lella Byrd did not at once answer, but stood watching as Uncle Cis carefully placed the bag in front of him and began planting from it; first in the right, and then in the left row, reaching out each time as far as he could.

"Cherub," Lella Byrd finally admitted, "I don't know what he's doing. I wish I did." Then remembering the boy she commanded tersely, "Ro, go see!"

He backed away muttering defiantly, "I won't. I ain't gwiner."

"You ain't?" the little tyrant questioned in a bullying tone. "Well, I'd just like to know why not. Didn't you promise to mind me forever if I'd rub your feet with rattlesnake ile so's the hants couldn't bother you? Humph?"

"Yassum, but——"

"And they didn't bother you just now when you went to show Cherub where I was, did they?" she continued judicially.

"No'am, but I'se skeered."

"Skeered!" she exclaimed with scorn; "ain't you 'shamed!"

"I'll go, Lella Byrd," Dorothy volunteered eagerly, her pity at once aroused in behalf of Ro who was now whimpering, and suiting the action to the words she ran across the fields.

"Oh Lawdy, chile," Uncle Cis called out as she neared him, "doan come ober heah; doan come no further! Please ma'am, don't; I ain't dressed," and he tried to flatten himself modestly behind the low earth mounds.

"But what are you doing?" Cherub asked,

stopping where she was. "Tell me because we want to know."

"Well den go back, honey," he begged. "Go back!" still trying to hide himself, "an' soon's I'se dressed I'll 'splain yer all 'bout it."

"But we want to know now," the child persisted. Uncle Cis hardly heard her, however, for his attention was attracted by the two other children running towards him, laughing and shouting as they came, for Lella Byrd having seen Cherub safely talking to Uncle Cis immediately developed bravery enough to follow.

"Oh chillens," Uncle Cis loudly pleaded, "please go back. What yer want'er look at a ole man like dis' anyhow fer? I ain't fittenly bedressed fur publication; I'se in my shirt tail!" he finished desperately.

"Yes, we know it," Lella Byrd panted, stopping beside Cherub, "but we don't care. What you doing, anyhow?"

Uncle Cis pulled his sparse toilet further down over his skinny legs and sighed with resignation.

"Well den ef dey mus', dey mus', Lawd," he murmured prayerfully, "but I'se as 'shamed

right now as I'll be ef Jedgemint day ketches me at night."

"What did you say?" asked Lella Byrd, hearing his murmur, and thinking he was answering her.

"Nothin' honey, nothin'."

"Well then, why *don't* you say something?" she demanded. "We asked you what you're doing."

"What is I doing?" he repeated, still too embarrassed to collect his wits. "What is I doing? Why, I'se jes plantin' taters, honey."

"I never say anybody lie down to plant potatoes," Lella Byrd commented.

"Ain't yer?" he asked, apparently surprised. "Well, I ain't neither, baby-chile; but yo' mammy devised me to do hit dis a'way."

"What for?" Cherub put in.

"Kase dey'll be charmed ef I plants 'em in my shirt tail; she say dey would. She say to me, 'Cicero Cæsar, I'se speeritualized in taters fer yeahs, an' if you'll go out at sun-up, on a Friday, during de conquaves of de moon, an' lay belly down in de dew an' plant taters

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in yer shirt tail, dem taters is perfectly charmed an' grows jes like magic!"

"Humph!" said Lella Byrd, who had been listening intently, believing every word of the superstition, "that's a good thing to know. Reckon I'll try it."

"But chillens," the old man pleaded, once more becoming painfully conscious of his attire, "won't yer please jes trespass back de way yer come fer a few minutes whilst I hop out of eyesore 'hind a tree an' git dressed. It's time I was goin' to Marse Willie's, I declar' 'tis."

Cherub brightened. "Oh, if you're going there we'll go with you, won't we Lella Byrd?"

"Yes-s," hesitated the other, "I reckon so, if Uncle Cis don't drive Maud or Molly, 'cause you know," she explained to Cherub, "it's awful bad luck to drive anything but a black horse on Friday."

"Law chile, I ain't gwine spit in de face of Marse Providence by drivin' no colored horses to-day," he said. "I'se gwine drive Ink, he black as sin, Lawd knows," he chuckled. "But

shoo! now chillens an' let a po' ole undressed genmen adore hisse'f."

"All right," Lella Byrd agreed, her ever nimble wits at work. "Let's go tickle the horses till Uncle Cis comes." Dorothy and Ro consented with alacrity and they all ran pell-mell from the field, while Uncle Cis took his clothing out of the "tater" bag and began to adorn himself.

He was soon dressed and at the stable, where he and the children climbed into the buckboard, drove out through the big gates, and were presently clattering down the road at full speed.

The moss-draped trees seemed to Dorothy to threaten still, as they had on the afternoon when she first saw Nelson Hall, and cuddling closer up to Lella Byrd she rejoiced in her newly acquired friend.

The buckboard bumped and rattled deafeningly. "Don't let's go to Billy's," suggested Lella Byrd, putting her head nearer Cherub's ear so as to be heard.

"Why not?" Cherub asked.

"'Cause I think it'll be more fun to go to my house; and oh! I tell you what!" giggling

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as the sudden thought struck her, "let's sneak out and run into the woods. It'll scare Uncle Cis awfully!"

"All right," agreed Cherub; "but why will he be scared?"

"*Why?*" repeated Lella Byrd incredulous. "Why, because these woods are hanted and he'll think they stole us."

"Oh," Dorothy said, "but then aren't you scared?" feeling a little nervous herself.

"Naw," boasted the other, "at least—that is—not much," she conceded. "It's worth the risk, anyhow."

"All right, let's do it now," Cherub laughed, sliding nearer the edge and dangling her feet over.

"Wait!" Lella Byrd commanded. "I've thought of an awfully funny stunt," and she drew something from her pocket, giggling so hard as she did so that she almost fell from the wagon.

"What is it?" Cherub asked.

"A rattler," displaying a spool strung on a twisted rubber-band between two wire hooks, with a ball of cord attached. "I'm going to

fasten this to his collar," she confided, holding her sides for merriment. "Then when we jump off I'll hold onto the cord and it'll unwind, and Lawdy!" she burst out laughing, "Uncle Cis will think the hants have got him for sho!"

Cherub joined in her merriment, while Rochellesalts rocked himself back and forth with glee.

"Law, Lel'byrd, you'se de think-uppedest gal I ever see," he said with admiration. "Let's do hit now."

"Yes, let's do it now," Dorothy repeated, catching the mischievous spirit that always possessed the other two.

"All right," Lella Byrd giggled, and standing up began fastening the rattler to Uncle Cis's unsuspecting neck.

The wagon clattered on, the gravel dancing about noisily as they went.

"What dat?" the old man asked in quick alarm as he felt Lella Byrd's hands on his collar.

"Hold still!" she commanded in answer, "while I get a bug off your neck, Uncle Cis."

"Aw-right, baby-chile," he agreed satisfied. "Aw-right!" and she hooked the rattler securely on.

"Now then," she whispered to the others, "I'll count three and we'll all jump down and run. One—two—three——" and they tumbled onto the road in a body and made for the bushes. The cord unwound, the spool spun and with one wild look behind him, in which he saw that the children had disappeared, Uncle Cis leapt from the wagon onto the horse's back, clutching his mane and kicking him furiously. Ink, the slow-running black, gave a snort of terror and took to his heels.

"Oh Gawd!" Uncle Cis screamed hysterically, as he felt the cord pull more and more each moment, "de hants is got us all fer sho'! Lawdy! Lawdy!"

* * * * *

"Who the devil is this coming?" Colonel Nelson exclaimed a few minutes later as he caught sight of a horse and rider tearing down the road at a mad gallop, an empty buckboard careening along behind them. They swung into Mr. Parker's driveway, raced on drunk-

only, then crashed against the porch and stopped. He and Mr. Parker jumped to their feet.

"Well, I'll be——"

"Oh, Marse, Marse," the rider broke in wildly, flinging himself at the Colonel's feet and clasping his arms about them, "Save me, save me, or dey'll git me too ef yer don't!"

"Now look here, Cicero," the Colonel said, shaking himself free. "Hush that fool nonsense and tell me what's the matter. What do you mean, anyway," he went on more sternly, "by racing in here like Old Nick was after you, hey?"

"Law, Marse, he war, he war," the man reiterated, "'fo' Gawd he war! Eider he, or his private fambly, or de hants, or somethin' war arter me, kase dey kidnapsacked de chillens outen de wagon right befo' my back, an' grabbed me hind de neck so hard I heared my carcus rattle!"

Mr. Parker laughed, while Colonel Nelson grunted with disgust, saying gruffly, "You old fool nigger, I don't know what you're talking about!"

"I'se talkin' about Ole Marse Nick, or de hants, or whatever artificial animal it was dat stole Mis' Rosey's gal an' Lella Byrd an' Ro," he said positively, still rolling his eyes about as though expecting to be grabbed again at any moment.

"You say they were in the back of your wagon?" Mr. Parker put in.

"Yassuh, Marse Willie, yassuh."

"Well then," he smiled, "they've played you some trick, Uncle Cis, I'll bet, for I know if Lella Byrd was along she'd manage to think up some kind of mischief."

"Yes," Colonel Nelson said frowning, "I don't like that girl, William, and I don't want the other one playing with her either, as I was saying just now."

"Colonel, I think you'll make a mistake if you interfere there. It's just as Mammy Caroline told you the other day, Dorothy needs companionship, and if you will not give her yours——"

"My God, William!" the Colonel interrupted hotly, "don't talk like that; you know I *can't*! If you had seen Dolly the past few days," his

voice broke, "and heard her frightened sobbing when I went near her, *I*, who love her better than my soul," he half choked, "you wouldn't blame me for my bitterness!"

Cicero stood, thoughtfully rubbing his neck, wanting, but not daring, to recall their attention to himself, and Mr. Parker continued without noticing him.

"Yes, I know," sympathetically; "but after all that's no reason for hardening your heart against an innocent little child, Colonel;" then as her face rose before his mind's eye he murmured half aloud, "dear little likeness of her mother!"

The Colonel caught at the words furiously, "Yes, that's just it. She's so like Rose, Rose whom I idolized, Rose who defied me, disobeyed me, left me, to marry a man whose people killed her brother——"

"Slowly, slowly, Colonel," the other warned. "Remember there are few of us who believe the carpet-baggers were Northerners in the true sense of the word. We know now that they were men without a country, outcasts, who spring up everywhere after war, and it is not

fair to blame the North for the riot in which you lost your little son."

"But Lord, man, those damned Yankees killed——"

"Those Yankees took their men as you took yours," he broke in sadly, "in the fairness of war, if there be such a thing, and they are no more responsible for your father's and brother's death than I am!"

The Colonel was impressed in spite of himself. "By Jove, William, you argue well," he conceded; "but you are of the younger generation who have not suffered; and I can never forgive Rose. Had she married you now—but there, there, boy," he added quickly, noticing the other's pained expression, "forgive me; I didn't mean to hurt you!"

"Rose married a *man*, Colonel," Mr. Parker answered, fighting as he thought for Dorothy's future happiness, "and you have no cause to hate his memory as you do."

"Good Lord, William!" Colonel Nelson flared. "A man? Do you call him who is skulking coward enough to steal a man's daughter a man, sir?"

"He did not steal your daughter," William Parker announced gently, "and you know it. He came to you as any honorable man would have done, and you insulted him. Hasn't it ever occurred to you, Colonel—forgive me for speaking so plainly—that Reuben Douglas was as justly proud of being a 'Yankee' as we are of being Southerners?"

Colonel Nelson was white with anger, but held himself in check while the younger man continued.

"Rose loved him, and when you insulted him, outraged his every loyal feeling, he went back to her, hurt and angry; and naturally she did what any girl of spirit would have done, married him then and there."

"And do you mean to say, sir," the Colonel thundered, "that you think——"

"Marse, Marse," Cicero interrupted, feeling that he must speak or burst, "yer *mus*' tell me what I gwine do 'bout dem chillens. You-alls doan seem to reecognize de seriousness of deir bein' stole?"

Colonel Nelson, thus recalled to the realization of the negro's presence, wheeled upon him

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angrily: "Silence, you black rascal, till I speak to you!"

"But Marse, we better save 'em ef we can."

Mr. Parker laughed, relieved that the tension was broken.

"Do you really believe, Cicero, that those children were stolen?" he asked, his eyes twinkling.

"Does I believe hit?" Uncle Cis repeated. "Why, Marse Willie, I knows hit. My nervous prosecution is plum shattered wid de shock of dem a'grabbin' 'em out de wagon an' *den* grabbin' me."

"Well, hush your nonsense," he admonished, still laughing. "We aren't worrying, so don't you. Go on around and attend to what you came for. Those children played some trick on you, that's all—and Uncle Cis," as he started to obey——

"Yassuh," grinning now, for he knew from past experience what was coming.

"Tell Aunt Lucretia to give you a toddy, just a little Baptist one, you know, suitable for a church-member of good and regular

standing. Reckon that'll help you sustain the shock, eh?"

"Yassuh, yassuh, thankee kindly, sah," Uncle Cis beamed, disappearing rapidly around the house, at once abandoning his idea of saving the children.

"I wonder what has become of those children, sure enough," Mr. Parker mused. "I certainly would like to know what new prank Lella Byrd has concocted this time."

Colonel Nelson was walking up and down the porch, thinking deeply, his hands thrust in his pockets, his head thrown back in a characteristic posture. He realized the justice of William Parker's words, and yet he could not bring himself to the point of accepting them. This was the first time in his life that anyone had ever dared talk to him as this man had done, and the experience left him shaken and less sure of himself than he could ever remember being before.

"But surely," he said, going back to where they had been interrupted, "you know, don't you, Dolly would never be as she is now if it had not been for him?"

"Yes," he said, "I know that had a great deal to do with Cousin Dolly's illness; but didn't you ever think, Colonel—now I don't want to hurt you, remember—but didn't it ever occur to you that your angry refusal to let Rose see her after her marriage may have had something to do with her mental condition now?"

"My God!" Colonel Nelson exclaimed, throwing his hands over his ears, "I can't listen to such talk!" Then turning fiercely as his anger gathered force, "Hush, you infernally impudent young upstart! How dare you say such things as you have to me. How dare you insult my gray hairs—you who but yesterday were a dawdling brat upon my knee!" he finished in scorn. Then he strode from the porch, yet knowing as he did so that there was truth in what he had just heard.

William Parker hesitated for a moment, then followed him, saying gently, "Colonel, you know I would not insult you for worlds; you must know that! Forgive me, therefore, if I seem to have done so. It is because I honor and respect you, sir, that I have talked so freely."

The Colonel made no answer, but strode on to the place where his horse stood tethered to a post, the other still following him.

"I know I may seem like an 'impudent upstart' as you say," he continued, "but truly I was trying to help you, sir." Then with a burst of his former show of feeling, "Why, Colonel, you're too big a man to let a sorrow ruin your whole life as you are doing——"

"That's enough, young man!" Colonel Nelson flung back at him, more furious than ever, and springing upon his horse rode away.

The younger man watched him with troubled eyes, then sighing turned and started back towards the house, when a laughing voice, almost at his ear, made him turn quickly.

"You and the Colonel at it again?" and a tall woman with softly parted hair stepped through the hedge at his side, and without waiting for a reply looked anxiously about her, asking, "Is Uncle Cicero here, Will, and is he all right? I'm worried about him."

"Oh, good morning, Laura," Mr. Parker said, recovering from his surprise. "Yes, he's there," indicating the back of the house with

a wave of his hand, "and I reckon he's all right as he's gone for his usual treat. Why? Can I do anything for you?" Then hearing the hedge crackle he looked in that direction again just in time to see Lella Byrd and Dorothy, with Rochellesalts in tow.

"Why hello," he greeted them smiling. "I thought the hants had stolen you-all. Uncle Cis told me they had."

Laura laughed, and the children stood about grinning as she told Mr. Parker of the prank they had just played on the old negro.

He laughed heartily during the recital, shaking his finger accusingly at Lella Byrd as each particular part of the trick was told him.

"But," Laura finished, tightening her lips to suppress her own merriment, "it's not altogether funny, as I have told the children, for Uncle Cis is a very old man, and might have hurt himself in his fright. I'm so glad he hasn't."

"No, he's all right," he reassured her. "And you-all are just in time to breakfast with me, so come on in" and he took the two girls by the hand.

"Oh, can we, Aunt Laura?" Lella Byrd cried excitedly, then without waiting for her consent jerked her hand away. "Bet I can beat you to it, Cherub!" and was off towards the house, the other children racing along behind her.

"Lem'me be the butler," panted Rochelle-salts, as they reached the uncovered side porch and saw a table set in the shade of a wide-spreading tree.

"Aw, you don't know how," scoffed Lella Byrd.

"I do too," he affirmed stubbornly. "Mammy say I'se a natural borned butler I'se so bow-legged."

"Yes, I think he'd make a very nice one," Cherub put in sympathetically, noticing his eagerness, "if you'd only let him try, Lella Byrd."

"No, Billy wouldn't like it," she objected.

"Oh, I don't think he'll mind. I'll ask him," and she ran back to where Cousin Billy and Laura Byrd were still standing.

"No, I can't come, Will," she was protesting. "I must go right home and see that Lell's tray

is all right. Mammy's been trying so many 'cure charms' on her lately, I don't dare let her fix her meals any more."

"But you worry too much about Lell," he argued. "You don't look well, Laura. You ought to get out more and not spend your life in an invalid's bedroom. Besides, isn't Lella Byrd old enough now to begin looking after her mother? It seems to me she could help you more than she does."

"Lella Byrd's nothing but a baby, Will," she said impatiently, "and I——"

"Well, it's not right!" he interrupted her, "and I've been worrying about you a lot lately."

"Oh, have you?" she said coldly, with a lifting of the brows which made him wonder if he had said anything to hurt her. Certainly her tone was a queer one, he thought.

"Cousin Billy-Bil," Cherub cried as she reached them, "can Ro be our butler? Please, he wants to awfully!"

Mr. Parker held up his hands in mock-horror, then laughed, "Why, I can stand it, I reckon, if the rest of you can. How about it,

Laura? For you will come, won't you, after such a lecture from me? Please!" and he smiled at her persuasively.

"Oh, very well," she agreed to both questions, and Cherub flew back, joyfully shouting, "You can, Ro; you can!"

"Well, now look-er-here, Ro!" Lella Byrd said impressively. "If I let you be butler this time you've got to swear to obey me in everything forever more, amen. Do you?"

Rochellesalts hesitated for a moment, looking at Cherub for further help, then conceded, "Yassum, I swears."

"Cross your heart and hope to die?"

"Yassum."

"Then do it," she commanded.

Rochellesalts crossed his right side solemnly saying, "Dern, double-dern, gosh, darn—damn."

"You crossed your *gizzard!*" Lella Byrd exclaimed, disgustedly. "Your heart's on your left side. Now do it all over again right and swear a double damn at the end to make it solemn."

Rochellesalts proceeded to do as he was told.

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"Now spit on your hands and clean 'em," she commanded. "Aunt Laura says it's dirty, but I've noticed it cleans 'em just the same."

Rochellesalts again obeyed orders and rubbed his hands vigorously on the seat of his trousers just as Laura and Mr. Parker reached the porch.

"Heah am your situations, ladies and gents," he announced, jumping forward ceremoniously and drawing out two chairs with a flourish, while Dorothy and Lella Byrd drew two more up to the table and sat down. "Jes 'scuse me whilst I goes arter de vittels," and bowing low, as he had often seen Uncle Cicero do, he entered the open kitchen door through which they could see Mr. Parker's old mammy, Aunt Lucretia Jane, now entirely recovered from the illness she had declared would be her last. Laura and Mr. Parker laughed heartily.

"Ro's a born butler, all right," Mr. Parker said admiringly. "Has a regular Quality bow. By Jove, I hope none of these higher education niggers will put notions in his head and

spoil him. I'd like to have him in about ten years from now!"

"But you believe in education for them, don't you, Will?" Laura asked.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "provided it's the Booker Washington kind that doesn't spoil an excellent butler by making a very poor school-teacher of him. Yes, of course it's up to us to help them to improve themselves," he continued; "but," with a sigh, "I hate to see the quaint old-time ones passing away; though it's bound to come, of course."

In a moment more Rochellesalts reappeared from the kitchen staggering along under a tray of sliced watermelon, his face, looking like a happy Jack-o'-Lantern, smiling above it. Aunt Lucretia Jane accompanied him, and after putting a slice at each place they took their stands behind Mr. Parker's chair and waited, Ro happy, but hungry-eyed.

"Yes, as I was saying," Mr. Parker remarked, "Ro will make a good butler some day, and then he can come and work for *me*."

Rochellesalts beamed. It was the happiest moment of his life; but it also seemed about

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the hungriest. He fidgeted about, wishing they would finish so that he, too, might have a chance to revel in the luscious feast, and watched each plate intently as the meal slowly progressed, delayed, as he thought, by too much attention to conversation and too little to business. Finally, so entirely absorbed was he in the anticipation of the treat in store for him, he failed to notice when they had all laid down their forks.

"Ro, remove de garbage!" loudly whispered Aunt Lucretia Jane, beginning herself to take off the plates.

"Lawdy," he ejaculated, jumping joyfully to the task and picking up the one nearest him. "Mis' La' yer ain't half et yourn," and snatching it from the plate he buried his face in its heart.

"Good Gawd!" the negress exclaimed, her Quality manners outraged, and, slapping the piece from his hands, dragged him from the presence of the astonished group.

Mr. Parker roared with laughter for a minute, in which the others joined, then he checked himself abruptly, saying, "The poor youngster.

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He was hungry, anyway, and melon, of all things! Of course he couldn't resist the temptation. I should have thought of that beforehand. But that's the way of the world," he continued thoughtfully, addressing Laura. "We emancipate a race, for instance, that is no more able to take care of itself than a child is, and then, when temptation comes and a member of it falls, we blame them rather than ourselves."

The meal was soon finished and they rose without the help of the butler, who could be seen through the open door sulking in the kitchen. He was watching Aunt Lucretia Jane bustling in and out, dumping the remaining contents of the plates into the waste bucket as she continued clearing the table.

"Law, Aunt 'Cretia," he burst out finally, unable to stay silent any longer. "I'se hongry, an' dat garbage pail sho do make my mouf water! Doan th'ow no mo' of it away; give hit to me!" but she paid absolutely no attention to him, intent only on serving her master's guests.

"And now I must run home as fast as I can," Laura said. "Aunt Lucretia, you gave us a

delicious breakfast;" and turning to Lella Byrd, "Come, dear, I'm afraid your mother may be worrying about us."

Mr. Parker stood aside to let them pass, saying as he did so, "Thank you, Laura. It has been years since I had anyone to preside at my table, and this has been a great treat to me." Then after a slight pause, "I'm going away to-day. When I come back will you and the children come again?"

"Certainly," she agreed smiling, but looking at him earnestly; then turning quickly away again said, "Come, Lella Byrd. Come, dear," and ran lightly down the steps.

The child obeyed reluctantly and they both went across the yard and pushed through the hedge that divided their place from that of Mr. Parker, and then on across the intervening field, and entered the yawning door of the sleepy old red brick house beyond.

"Cousin Billy-Bil," Cherub broke the silence, as standing together they watched them. "I love Aunt Laura, and I'm going to call her Auntie-La for a love name. She's got the saddest and lovindest eyes! And did you know

she and Rosemother were little girls and played together?"

"Yes, Dorothy," he answered, "I was a little boy then, too, and used to play with them."

"Oh, were you?" she asked, excitedly. "Then you three were just like Lella Byrd and me and Ro, weren't you?"

"Well, not exactly," he laughed, as a picture of Rochellesalts rose before him. Then more seriously he continued, "But I'm glad you love her, Dorothy. She's the finest woman I ever knew, and your mother loved her dearly."

"Then I'll love her dearly, too," she agreed, "for I love everybody dearly that Rosemother does—at least—that is," she hesitated, "everybody but *one*."

Cousin Billy looked at her, troubled. He had heard from Mammy Caroline of her hatred for her grandfather, and it saddened him to realize, as he did now, that it was true, and that such a blight had so soon entered her blossoming heart.

"But why are Auntie-La's eyes so sad and loving, Cousin Billy-Bil?" she resumed.

"I don't know, Dorothy," he answered absent-mindedly. "Are they?"

"Oh yes. Why, when she was talking to you she looked just like Rosemother used to sometimes when she was telling me things about father. She looked that way all breakfast time. Didn't you notice it? But I guess she loves you a great deal, doesn't she?"

The man was stunned by these simple words. They seemed to fairly scream through his mind, echoing and re-echoing as they went, and he recalled Laura as she sat smiling at him from the end of his table. Could it be possible, he wondered? Did Laura Byrd, whom he had known all his life, to whom he had taken every sorrow, even that of Rose Nelson's marriage, love him? And then, suddenly, all the years of their friendship seemed to spin themselves into a golden thread before him, and he realized how much she meant to him.

"Dorothy," he said, his voice trembling as he stooped and kissed her, "I hope you are right, child. It would be very beautiful if she did!"

CHAPTER VI

NELSON HALL stood still and silent in the moonlight. Around about it brooded the magnolia trees like dark sleep-clouds, their swaying blossoms nodding sweet dream faces gently to and fro.

Close to the silvered garden the little house seemed sleeping with the sleeping flowers, but at her window stood the Sorrylady, wide-eyed, gazing towards the Hall, thinking,—thinking,—thinking. The image of the child she had seen in the garden a few days before haunted her, and her mind, that for so long had been sleeping too, stirred uneasily, endeavoring to rouse itself.

The pretty room in which she lived, with its toys on every shelf and in every corner, as though an unnaturally neat child had left it just a moment before, seemed all at once to become unfamiliar, and she looked about her puzzled.

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"Why was she there instead of at Nelson Hall, anyway? Whose room was this? She had not always lived there, she knew, for there," again looking from the window, "was the window of her room at Nelson Hall that overlooked the garden. What did it all mean? And where was Rose? Ah, that was the question, after all!

"Was this Rose's room—or was it hers?" Her head hurt her so she simply couldn't think!

"Yes, it was Rose's room. Still—she lived there; but why?"

She gazed about her at the objects that had again taken on their usual aspect.

"Yes," she concluded, "it was Rose's room; for here, right in front of her, were the pictures that she and the Colonel had cut out and pasted on the walls." She laughed a low mother-laugh as she looked at them now only half discernible in the moonlight—the gaily-colored witch riding her broomstick through the sky, while all over the walls groups of snubby-nosed children and animals laughed merrily at the prank. "Yes, Rose would be six to-morrow and this was her birthday sur-

prise. What fun it had been fixing it up! She should have the whole of the little two-roomed cottage in the garden for her play-house!

"Six to-morrow? No, not six. She was a bigger girl than that. Rose would be ten to-morrow. She was a really, truly, big girl now; for, see! there on the window frame was her height marked in red pencil." The Sorry-lady stooped closer and examined it. "Why, there were one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, eleven, *twelve* marks!" She counted them slowly. "What did it mean?"

She crossed the room quickly, lighted a candle and went back, peering still closer to make sure. There they were, twelve marks, one topping the other like rounds in a ladder, steadily climbing upward. And beside each mark was a faintly penciled line. The first one read: "*Rose's height at six years—3 feet, 3 inches.*" Then just above, another line announcing more boldly: "*Rose, seven years, 3 feet, 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches.*"

Her eyes traveled up, up, reading each faded record as they went, and she became more and

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more astonished, until finally they rested upon the top round which announced proudly:

"Miss Rose, eighteen years—5 feet, 1½ inch."

At the side of this was scrawled in a round, girlish hand, "Good-bye, old birthday ladder; I've grown up!" That was all, and yet to the woman standing there in the candle-light it meant, vaguely, everything in the world.

She put her hands to her face and tried to push back the clouds that threatened to enfold her again. The misty pain in her head grew sharply worse; she could not see, and yet she did see at that very moment a beautiful fair-haired girl hardly larger than a child rise up out of the surrounding gloom and clasp her to her breast.

"Rose!" she cried in an ecstasy of joy, "my Rose!" Then her voice breaking into a wail, "He says you are married; but you aren't, dear, are you? You wouldn't leave your mother like that, would you, darling? Oh Rose!"

"Lawdy Mussy, Ole Mis'!" exclaimed Mammy Caroline, who had just been awakened by her cry, and now hurried in from the next room where she always slept, "doan carry on

like dat, honey! Don't, don't!" and she patted and soothed her as though she were a baby.

Mammy Caroline was frightened, and yet her heart sang a glad hallelujah in spite of it. For eight years, ever since the day Rose married, she had watched over the mother who had ceased to remember beyond the time when her Rose had been six years old. The shock of her daughter's disobedience on that day, the Colonel's uncontrolled anger and his refusal to let her see Rose, had been too much for her, and her mind had promptly found the only relief then possible, forgetting everything save a few happy years of the past. So far as those constantly about her knew, she remembered absolutely nothing except Rose as a small girl.

The Colonel had consented that she live in the little playhouse because she insisted upon staying there all day long, and he and Mammy Caroline always had so much difficulty in persuading her to go up to Nelson Hall at night. This little house seemed to her half-sleeping mind the one place of all others where she

might find her baby, for it was here that they had spent so many happy hours together.

And now Mammy had heard her refer to Rose's marriage, something she had never mentioned before and a fact which everyone thought she had forgotten forever. "I wonder what hit do mean?" she pondered half aloud, still patting and soothing the sobbing little figure, and looking anxiously into the sorrowful face. "Is Gawd gwiner sweep de cobwebs outen her sky at last, I wonder? Lawd! I wish he would!" she burst out fervently, all the strength of her loyal love ringing in her voice as she spoke.

"Caroline," the Sorrylady said sadly, looking into the loving eyes above her own, "I think I shall die if Rose doesn't come to me soon."

Mammy Caroline was more perturbed than ever, for the tone was so rational, and she looked more as she used to look than Mammy had seen her during all the years of her faithful service in the little house.

"Lawdy, honey-chile," she comforted, "Mis' Rosey gwiner come soon, doan yer fret; but

jes come back to bed now," taking hold of her hand persuasively, "an' she'll soon be heah."

But Mis' Hant shook her head, drawing away and refusing to go.

Mammy Caroline had soothed her with these same words hundreds of times before, but now they only seemed to excite her the more.

"But Caroline," she argued, "he told me she was married," and she began sobbing again; "married, married against his will, and that I should never see her again. Oh, what shall I do?"

"Oh Gawd," Mammy Caroline moaned, thoroughly frightened now, but determined, whatever happened, to stay by and comfort her dearly beloved mistress. "Sh-h-h, darlin', sh-h-h, Mis' Rosey ain't married. How kin she be?" she asked cunningly. "Ain't she jes' six year old? Lawdy, how yer does talk anyhow!" and she pretended to laugh at the very foolishness of the idea.

"No!" the Sorrylady cried vehemently. "No, she's not six years old! See here!" and she ran across the room, pointing to the birthday ladder

that scaled the window ledge and went climbing on up the wall till past the five-foot mark.

"What is it?" Mammy Caroline asked fearfully.

"What is it?" the Sorrylady repeated, "Why, it's Rose's ladder!" almost screaming in her excitement. "See, she's eighteen years old!" Then her voice broke. "And yet——," she faltered, "and yet—I saw her only a few days ago. She came to me out there," pointing to the garden, "and I kissed her, and talked to her, and she was only six years old!"

"Yes, darlin', her's only six," the negress agreed, and a wonderful daring plan sprung, full-fledged, into her brain at the moment. "Yes, her's jes six, an' is a comin' here to play wid yer jes like she used to. Yassum, her sho is."

"Really, really come?" the lady asked happily, clapping her hands like a child, "and not to go away when I try to touch her? But then——" she hesitated and spoke very slowly, "How can she come—she's married, isn't she?"

For answer Mammy Caroline picked the little figure up, and walking over to the bed de-

posited her there. "Now, Ole Mis'," she said firmly, "you jes' decompose yo'se'f right dar. She ain't married, an' what's mo' her is jes six year old, an' I'se gwiner fetch her to you right now," and turning she left the room.

She had made up her mind to do what she realized was the most dangerous and serious thing she had done in all her life, and though she trembled at the possible consequences she still remained unshaken in her belief that she must do it. So throwing a skirt on and gathering a big shawl about her shoulders she unlocked the front door and stepped hurriedly out into the moonlight. Glancing about her fearfully she murmured a prayer for protection, and half trotted, half hobbled, across the intervening garden and entered the side door of Nelson Hall. Creeping through the big hallway, where Nelsons in powdered hair, Nelsons without powdered hair, and Nelsons without any hair at all, glared down at her from the walls, she started up the winding stairs,—when suddenly a swaying branch outside threw its shadow in at the window, and she thought she saw one of them put his foot out and start

stepping from the frame. With a smothered scream of fright she ceased her ascent for a moment, and clung to the railing, shaking with terror.

"Who's there?" Colonel Nelson demanded sharply, awakened by the noise.

"Jes me, Marse, jes me, dat's all," she answered, his voice reassuring her, and she crept on up to the room where Cherub lay asleep.

The Colonel was used to her coming to the house at all hours, so after receiving her answer he turned over and went straight to sleep again. His summons, however, had frightened and worried Mammy Caroline, and she felt more troubled than ever as she reached Cherub's room and realized fully the risk of her undertaking. Entering, she went to the bed and hung over it for a moment before she spoke. She knew only too well that if the Colonel discovered her there, or ever found out what she purposed doing that night, he would never forgive her. But her loyal old heart once again cried out against his injustice, and she determined she would carry out her plan in spite of everything.

"Honey," she whispered, slipping her arm beneath the child's pillow and gently shaking her, "honey, I needs yer. Wake up!"

Dorothy roused, opened her eyes, smiled at the earnest brown face above her, and then, seeing that it was still night, though the moonlight made her room almost as bright as day, she said in surprise, "Why, Mammyline, it's the middle of the night! What do you want?"

"I wants yer love to he'p me, baby-chile. Love's de powfullest curator on yearth, an' I believes me an' you kin cure my Ole Mis' wid it ef we tries right now."

The child did not understand this speech, and lay looking up at the woman uncomprehendingly.

"Heah," she continued, getting up and bringing a warm coat to Dorothy, "slip dis on an' come wid me. An' doan yer make no fuss!"

Cherub obeyed, and they tip-toed from the room down the stairs, ran the gauntlet of the bygone Nelsons, and stole out into the moonlit garden.

"But where're we going, Mammyline?" the

child asked as soon as they were clear of Nelson Hall.

"To Mis' Hant's, honey."

"To Mis' Hant's?" she echoed, incredulous. "Why, you told me that he was right and that I mustn't go there!"

"Yassum, I knows I did," the woman acknowledged, "but I'se changed de disregard of my considerations now an' decided dat he's wrong an' dat yer mus' go dar."

Dorothy felt too puzzled to continue the argument and they walked on in silence a few more yards until, as they reached a bench that stood beneath an old tree which seemed always to be eavesdropping, Mammy Caroline paused and said: "Chile," then suddenly sitting down and drawing Cherub to her knee, "dis am de way yo' love kin he'p me. My Ole Mis', dat I loves nex' to Gawd, am in dar," pointing to the little house, "a'sufferin' 'cause He's seed fit to touch her an' make her forgit. De udder niggers thinks it's de hants what's done it, an' says dat she's been hoo-dooed till she's jes like a hant herse'f. But I loves her, an' I knows dat she's like she is jes 'cause her rememberer

cracked one day when it got too full of sorrow an' worriment; dat's all dat's de matter wid my Ole Mis'." She choked down a sob, then continued: "I'se done my best to cure her, but I ain't nothin' but a po' old nigger 'oman no-how, an' I oughten to 'spected Gawd to lemme do it, 'cause o' course I ain't fitten," and now the sobs refused to be choked back; "but you *is* fitten, chile," she said, wiping her eyes and looking at Cherub fondly, "an' I believes yo' love kin do it."

"Amen, sister, amen," a solemn voice intoned from out the shadows, and Uncle Cis stepped forward into view.

"Good Lawd, Cicero Cæsar!" Mammy Caroline exclaimed angrily, frightened out of her tender mood. "What you a'sneakin' round, skeering ladies exposed to de night fer, humph?"

"Law, Ca'line, I didn't mean to skeer yer," he apologized. "I heard Ole Mis' a'cryin', den I seed you go out, an' I been actin' like a sentimental a'keepin watch till yer come back, dat's all."

"All right, den," she said, appeased. "But

yer kin jes relieve yo'se'f o' duty now, an' misplace yo' carcus at onc't, cause dis am me an' my little Mis's business, an' we'se gwine take our remains inside dar," and so saying she stood up and started once more towards the little house.

"Mammyline," Cherub asked anxiously, trotting along by her side, "why are we going to Mis' Hant's? You haven't told me yet, and I don't understand what you want me to do?"

Mammy Caroline stopped and dropped upon her knees, putting her arms about her. "I wants yer to go in dar, honey," she said, "an' put yo' arms roun' her neck, so—and say, 'Mother-Dolly' (dat's what Mis' Rosey usen to call her, 'cause she heard us say *Mis'* Dolly, so she jes say '*Mother Dolly*'). An' you say, 'Mother Dolly,' jes like dat. 'I'se come home. I'se yo little Rose, an' I ain't gwiner leave yer no mo'."

"But I'm not Rose," Dorothy objected. "She called me Rose and I told her I was Dorothy."

"Yes, I know, baby-chile, but yer jes say what I tells yer."

Dorothy shook her head. "No," she said, "I don't want to say I'm Rose when I'm Dorothy. Why do you want me to, anyhow?"

"'Cause hit would make her happy, an' maybe git her rememberer well agin!" she argued, knowing instinctively that this would appeal to the child's kind heart.

Dorothy still hesitated.

"Yo' ma loved her, darlin'," she persuaded, "an' she's a lookin' down over de battlements of heaven right now, an' she'd like to see yer do it."

"All right, then," Cherub agreed, "I will." So they went on to the little house and Mammy, a'quiver with excitement, unlocked the door and they stepped into her candle-lit room.

"Oh, what a pretty house!" Cherub cried. "I like it here; but I don't see the Sorrylady. Where is she?"

"In de nex' department," Mammy Caroline answered, waving her hand towards the room beyond.

Dorothy on tiptoe, her curls dancing, ran lightly forward, but stopped short as she heard the sound of quiet crying that came through

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the half-closed door. "Oh, Mammyline," she said, distressed and running back, "it's the Sorrylady. Do you think I really can make her happier?"

Mammy nodded assent, motioning the child to go on in.

"Now do what I tole yer!" she whispered, as they approached the door together and Cherub reluctantly walked through it.

She felt very sorry for the little still white figure that lay before her on the bed, and was also awed and rather frightened, so hesitated before going nearer.

"Go ahead," the negress again admonished. "Go on, honey, an' do what I tole yer."

Dorothy went to the bed, and put her arms about the pillowed head. "Mother Dolly," she said, "Mother Dolly, I've come home. I'm your little Rose, though my name's really Dorothy, you know—and I'm not going to leave you any more."

Mammy Caroline was leaning forward eagerly, her lips parted, her eyes bright with love and hope, as the child repeated the words she had taught her; but the white face did not

change its expression, and with a cry of disappointment she jumped forward. "Oh, Gawd," she said in sudden alarm, "she's wosser. She don't even hear what yer says," and she seated herself on the side of the bed and lifted the little limp head to her bosom. "Darlin', darlin'," she pleaded, "speak to Ca'line! Tell her she ain't hurt yer by being such a fool as to think she could he'p. Lawdy, Lawdy!" and the tears fell upon the unconscious face. Her grief was pitiful to see as she tried various means of restoring the Sorrylady to consciousness, while Cherub, more frightened than ever, began to cry. This at last seemed to rouse her as nothing else had done, and opening her eyes she looked at Dorothy.

"Rose," she said faintly, "come here!" and Cherub ran to her, this time gladly, and put her arms about her once more.

"Please don't cry!" she begged. "I love you, and I really won't leave you any more if you don't want me to."

The little lady lay quiet for a long time; then her arms tightened about the caressing child, and Mammy Caroline, comforted by

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the thought that her plan might work after all, rose swiftly from the bed, motioning Dorothy to take her place.

The Sorrylady was very happy, and yet as she lay there with the little warm cheek against her own she felt the vague feeling of sorrow and distress that was ever present in her mind. At last she stirred and lifting her hands drew Cherub's face in front of her own. "Are you Rose?" she questioned uneasily, looking earnestly into her eyes. "Or is Rose married? Answer me!"

Mammy Caroline moved closer. "Tell her what yer tole her befo', honey," she whispered; but Dorothy shook her head, for she could not but feel that this Sorrylady, for whom she felt such a strong love, ought to know exactly who she was and learn to love her for herself.

"No," she answered. "My name's Dorothy, not Rose; though you must call me Cherub 'cause that's my love-name. Don't you remember I told you that the other day? Rosemother was named Rose, but I'm named Dorothy Douglas. But," she continued, noticing Mammy's worried look, "I'll say I'm Rose if it will

make you happy. I'm really Dorothy though, you know."

"No, no, *Rose*," the Sorrylady said, frowning a little, just as she had done in the garden when they had both used the same words. "Your father wanted me to name you for myself, but I named you for the roses."

Cherub suddenly loosed her hold about the Sorrylady and sat up. "Mammyline," she asked excitedly, "wouldn't Rosemother's mother be my grandmother?"

Mammy Caroline nodded, the tears running down her cheeks as she leaned further forward and watched her Ole Mis' more intently than ever. "Yas, darlin', her would," she said.

"Oh-h, then *you're* my *grandmother*, Sorrylady!" Cherub cried, and flung her arms about her again. "My grandmother! And I didn't even know I had a grandmother! But you aren't 'Sorrylady,' or 'Mother-Dolly'; you're my Grandolly, that's what you are!" quick as always to give a love-name. "My Grandolly, and I love you!"

The Sorrylady hugged her closer, but looked

troubled. "Is Rose married?" she queried in a dull voice. "Is she married? Tell me!"

"Yassum," Mammy Caroline assented joyfully, "she are, honey, an' dis am yo' little gran'-gal heah by yo' side. Can't you reckon, darlin'? Try! Try!" she begged excitedly. "Try to work yo' thinker! Ca'line an' Mis' Rosey's little gal does want so much to make yer well."

"Rose——" the Sorrylady murmured, troubled, "Rose — Caroline — Dorothy," looking first to one, then to the other, shaking her head wearily. "I don't know. I don't know," she half sobbed; "I'm so tired!" and she nestled nearer the child and closed her eyes.

Mammy Caroline sat watching, rocking back and forth, her mind busy alike with the past and the future, as the two on the bed fell asleep. Sitting thus she saw the dawn, full of curiosity to find out what night had been doing, creep up and peep over the hills, and hearing the early morning stir of the waking negro quarters just beyond, she roused herself from her reverie. "Lawdy," she muttered, "I mus' git dat baby-chile back to her room 'fo' Ole Marse

wakes up, I sho' mus'," and going to the bed she lifted Dorothy gently up, and tiptoed with her out of the house.

"Why!" Cherub exclaimed, waking a few minutes later and seeing that she was being carried into her own room, "what are you doing with me, Mammyline? Let me go!" and she struggled from the woman's arms and stood up.

"Sh-h-h, honey, doan wake Ole Marse," she cautioned. "You was 'sleep, an' I'se jes bringed yer home befo' daylight crowed."

"Oh, yes, now I remember," Dorothy answered, smiling joyfully. "Just think, Mammyline, I've got a really-truly grandmother! Why even Mary and Elizabeth haven't a grandmother! And it feels so good to cuddle up and know she *belongs* to me; 'cause you know, Mammyline, I used to be awfully used to being cuddled. And I don't mind her rememberer being cracked," she declared loyally. "I like it."

"Law, baby-chile, doan say dat. We want to make her rememberer well."

"Why? I think she's just perfect like she is!"

"Yas, honey, her's perfect. My Ole Mis's always been perfect, but we wants to mend her rememberer so she kin be more happier, jes like she usen to be."

"Yes," Cherub assented thoughtfully, "I want her to be happy, but I don't think she will be a Sorrylady any more now anyway, as long as me and you are loving her so hard. Do you, Mammyline?"

"No, chile, I don't," she said fervently.

"Oh, I'm *so* glad!" Dorothy sighed, leaning affectionately against the negress for a moment, then climbing into bed. "There's so awfully many people to love, Mammyline. There's you," counting on her fingers, "and Grandolly, and Cousin Billy-Bil, and Auntie-La, and Lella Byrd,—and Ro."

Mammy Caroline chuckled, "Law, baby-chile, ef yer loves Rochellesalts you'se doin' well in Christian endeilment, 'cause dat little nigger's jes natu'ally too ugly to love, I thinks. Why, when I seed his ma a'holdin' him fer de fust time I says to her real pleasantlike, 'Good

evenin', Mis' Johnson, whar yer git dat dough-face chile frum, an' are he sick or jes natu'ally raw boneded?" " And she laughed heartily at the recollection. "Why, honey," controlling her mirth with difficulty, "his two legs looks like a picked wish-bone now, an' ef I'd been born as ugly as him I'd sue my maw fer damages, I declar' I would—but here I is runnin' on like dis," she interrupted herself, "when yer oughter be gittin' in some mo' sleep," and she drew the covers up over the child.

"Turn over now, honey-babe," patting her, "an' befo' yer thinks yer've gotten two nappy-winks I'll be back heah wid yo' breakfas'. So dar now," and she tucked her in.

Dorothy turned obediently and Mammy Caroline went softly from the room.

CHAPTER VII

THE sun was high overhead when Cherub again awoke and heard her name being called shrilly from below:

"Hey, Cherub, wake up!" Then in a teasing chant the words:

"'Brudder Lizzard made a hoe cake, and put de frog to mind it.

De frog he went to sleep and de snake he come and find it.

Brudder Lizzard he come home, and found his hoe cake stole,

And he say to Brudder Frog, "You'se a sleepy-headed mole!" "

"And so are *you*, Cherub!" the voice concluded.

"I'm not!" Dorothy shouted, recognizing the voice as that of Lella Byrd. She sprang up and started to the window, but before she was halfway across the floor her attention was caught by another sound, and glancing towards

the open door she was surprised to see Colonel Nelson standing there.

"Child," he said, and she jumped at the sound of his voice, "I do not want you to play with Lella Byrd Lawson. Understand? Get back in bed until Caroline brings your breakfast."

Dorothy stood still, too astonished to obey, and her heart sank as she realized the import of what he had said.

"Get back," he repeated, not unkindly, but making a gesture of impatience.

At this second command Dorothy felt a wave of quick anger rush over her, just as it had done during their encounter in the garden, and though she did not in the least understand why, she suddenly felt glad of it. With a proud lifting of her little head she walked over to the bed and got in, but her eyes flashed straight into his as they had before, and she said defiantly, "But I *will* play with Lella Byrd Lawson!"

He looked at her a moment in silence, then strode away, closing the door behind him. He knew that he should not have done so without

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asserting his authority in unmistakable terms and administering an adequate rebuke—that the child's outspoken defiance of him was all wrong—and yet he could not help admiring her for it. "By Jove!" he again said. "She's got the Nelson spirit all right."

"You sleepy-headed mole, why didn't you answer me?" Lella Byrd asked, cracking Cherub's door; then, after peering around to see if anyone else was there, walking in.

Dorothy lay, a rebellious heap in the middle of the bed.

"Brudder Lizzard made a hoe——"

"Oh hush, Lella Byrd," Cherub interrupted, crossly.

"Well, get up then," Lella Byrd commanded. "What's the matter anyhow? Didn't I hear your grandpa in here just now?"

"No, you didn't," the other stated angrily.

"Why, Dorothy Douglas, you know I did!"

"You didn't, I tell you!" Cherub flared. "I haven't got any grandpa; he's not anybody's grandpa; he's not a grandpa at all. I told you that once, and I hate him!"

"Oh, well," Lella Byrd answered noncha-

lantly, dismissing, as it were, the whole subject, so evidently disagreeable to Cherub. " 'No one's family is perfect,' as I heard Billy say to Aunt Laura. But why don't you get up? Ain't you going to the baptizing?"

"What baptizing?" Cherub asked, at once interested. "What's a baptizing, anyway?"

Lella Byrd looked at her pityingly. "Don't you even know that? Well, if you'll get up and dress you can go and see one," she condescended. "At least, that is, if the niggers don't mind. I'm really the only white folks asked; these are quality niggers around here and they are particular, but I reckon they wouldn't mind me bringing you."

"Oh, are you going?" Dorothy asked stupidly.

"Why, of course I'm going—that is, if Aunt Laura don't see me first. This is a powerful big event," she continued; "all the niggers got a holiday, and after the baptizing they're all going down the river to Mobile."

"The river? I didn't know there was a river here!" Cherub exclaimed, surprised. "Are you going there too?"

"Of course—at least, that is, if some of the cranky niggers don't see me. No white folks are allowed, so me and Ro's going to slip on at the last minute, and Mammy's going to pretend I come by mistake. But it won't be a mistake, because I gave her mother's wedding veil that I found in an old trunk to let me. Mammy's a widow-lady, you know," she explained. "Her husband died last month, and I told her she might be needing a veil before very long, so if she'd let me go on the boat excursion I'd give her one."

"I wish I could go," Dorothy said wistfully; then remembering her grandfather's command, "and I will, too; I'll run away!" and she sprang out of bed and began dressing.

"All right," Lella Byrd agreed, "it's very nice to run away. Nearly everybody in story-books runs away; but I reckon it would be awful bad luck unless you did it right."

Dorothy did not answer, but went on hurriedly getting into her clothes.

"There's a certain way you have to do it," Lella Byrd said dreamily, beginning at once to concoct some mischief into which she could

lead Dorothy. "But here there, Cherub, what you doing?" she exclaimed suddenly, and grabbed away the stocking Cherub was just putting on. "You're putting that stocking on in a bad-luck way! Here, kiss the heel and then run it down in the toe—so. Now put it on."

"But it's wrong-side out," Dorothy objected.

"Of course it is. You surely wouldn't risk wearing it right-side out on an excursion, would you? It's awful bad luck."

"Well, I don't care," Cherub answered. "I'm not going to wear it wrong-side out, so there!" and she pulled the stocking on correctly.

"The idea!" Lella Byrd grumbled, provoked, as she always was, that Dorothy would not obey her as implicitly as Ro did. "You just seem to *try* to bring bad luck on all your friends. That's what you do. And just to show that you ain't afraid of nothing! Well, you'll get fooled some day," she prophesied darkly. "Are you ready?"

"Yes," Cherub answered, "come on," and grabbing her hat she started for the door.

"Dorothy Douglas, you don't mean to say you're going that way!" Lella Byrd exclaimed, "and after bragging about how you were going to run away!"

"Why, of course," Dorothy answered. "What's the matter with me?" not understanding, and looking herself up and down to discover the trouble.

"No one ever runs away out the door. They make ropes of their beautiful golden hair, and skin down out the window," Lella Byrd announced.

"But, Lella Byrd, my hair's too short," Cherub objected. "Just look at it. It's not much longer than my finger. Besides I don't see how anybody can skin out the window on their own hair, anyhow!"

"Well, they can," she affirmed. Then looking at Cherub's curls, "but I reckon you really can't, so you'll have to skin down a post."

Dorothy went to the window and looked out on the sloping roof just below. From this two supporting posts ran down to the small porch beneath. "Very well," she consented, "but it looks kind of scarey."

"Skeery, nothing!" Lella Byrd mocked scornfully, "You're a 'fraid-cat, that's the trouble with you."

"I'm not a 'fraid-cat, and you know it!" Dorothy returned hotly, and scrambled from the window on to the roof. "Come on," she called, and began crawling towards the edge.

"Why, *I'm* not running away," Lella Byrd answered calmly. "It's just you that's running away. I'm going without telling anybody, which is very different, and I can go by the door," and turning her back on Cherub she skipped into the hall.

Dorothy hesitated for a moment, then fairly flinging herself back into the room ran out and down the stairs after Lella Byrd, who, not hearing her, and thinking of course she was still on the roof, had joined Rochellesalts waiting below.

"You'll see a funny sight in a minute, Ro," she confided, looking up at the roof and giggling expectantly. "I've played a joke on Cherub and she's going to try to skin down one of those posts."

"Law, Lel'byrd," the pickaninny grinned

admiringly, "you'se de jokednest gal I ever see, I declar' you is!"

"Lella Byrd!" Dorothy called out indignantly, running from the house. "You're a 'fraid-cat yourself, and I won't skin down the post! I'll run away and go to the baptizing the same way you do."

Rochellesalts gasped as he heard his law-giver defied, and Lella Byrd, recovering her surprise, kept her injured dignity by saying coldly, "All right, I don't care," and walked off down the driveway.

The other two followed and soon they were beyond the hedge and trotting down the dusty road.

"Which way is the river?" Cherub asked curiously.

"Down there," Lella Byrd pointed.

"Hit's mo' nearer to go by Mis' Hant's house," Ro panted, "but we'se skeered."

"Skeered nothing!" Lella Byrd scoffed, continuing by way of the road, however. "I ain't skeered; I just like this way better."

Dorothy stopped abruptly.

"Lella Byrd," she announced, thinking for

the first time since she had awakened of her experience of a few hours before, "she's my grandmother! Just think, my really-truly grandmother!"

Lella Byrd halted, surprised and interested in spite of herself, while Ro rolled his eyes excitedly and backed away a little.

"Who's your grandmother?" she asked.

"The Sorrylady," Cherub answered happily, "and she's so sweet and loving, Lella Byrd, that she made me feel almost like she was a beautiful Rosemother; and Mammyline says she's never been hanted, her rememberer's cracked, that's all, and we're going to make that well."

"Humph," Lella Byrd commented, recovering her usual superior manner, "do you believe that?"

"Why, of course," Cherub answered. "Besides, you know, I've charmed her so she can't be hanted any more, even if she ever had been before."

"I wouldn't risk it if I was you. You never can tell about hants nohow; they're the fool-

ingest things in the world; and besides, how do you know she's your grandmother, anyhow?"

"Because she was Rosemother's mother when she was a little girl like me," Dorothy answered with conviction.

"Well," Lella Byrd warned, "you can't be sure. You didn't see her when your mother was a little girl, and I wouldn't have too much to do with her, 'cause she's a crazy old woman."

"She's not a crazy old woman!" Cherub angrily declared, stamping her foot, "and you shan't call her that! She's my grandmother! And I won't let you call her Mis' Hant any more, either. Nobody shall call her Mis' Hant any more, for it's a lie-name!"

She was almost sobbing in her excitement, and Lella Byrd, not understanding such in-born loyalty, looked at her flushed little face curiously.

"You can call her Sorrylady, though," she conceded more calmly, "because that's kind of a love-name; but Grandolly's going to be her real love-name after this, for that's what I call her."

"Well, I don't care," Lella Byrd returned,

tired of the subject and too intent upon the prospects of the baptizing anyway to think much of anything else. "Come on; we'll be late if you don't hurry. Git, Ro!" and she gave the pickaninny a push forward and started again herself.

"I don't think I'll go," Dorothy said, standing where she was. "I guess I'd rather go see Grandolly," and she half turned.

"Aw, you're just skeered to run away," Lella Byrd taunted over her shoulder.

"I'm not!" the other replied hotly, running forward and joining her. "You know I'm not scared of anything!"

"Don't brag so much then and come on," and she quickened her pace down the road.

Cherub gave a wistful glance back at the little house in the garden, hesitated a moment, and then followed the others.

They trotted on down the road that ran past several haughty old Quality houses standing back proudly aloof from all passers-by, and then on until they came to a place where the road seemed suddenly to shy into the bushes and make a bee-line for the river, plunging in.

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"Here we are at the pool, and there's Uncle Cis," Lella Byrd cried, spying Uncle Cicero, who with the help of a number of other men was cutting down and piling up small saplings and bushes along the bank. "Let's help him," and she ran quickly forward.

"What are they doing?" Cherub called, following her.

"Making bush arbors," Lella Byrd shouted back shortly. "Hello, Uncle Cis, we've come to the baptizing!"

"Why, howdy, chillens," he beamed, taking them all in in a kindly glance, "but you'se pow'ful previous-handed an' befo' time. De ceremonials doan begin fer a long time yit."

"Yes, we know it," Lella Byrd said, "but we've come to help."

"Oh, awright, baby-chile, awright," he agreed, chuckling, as was his wont.

"But what are bush arbors?" Cherub persisted. "I don't understand."

"Oh, Cherub, you don't understand nothing!" Lella Byrd answered impatiently, beginning with Ro's assistance to pick up some cut bushes lying about.

"Now, chile," Uncle Cis admonished severely, "doan be impatient wid a wonderin' sister! How yer 'spec' her to 'chaw fruit from de tree of knowlidge,' as Brudder Brown say, unless yer 'splains to her de internal workin's of our umptious Gawd. Bush arbors, Little-Mis'," turning to Dorothy, "are Baptist dress-in' rooms whar yer shed yo cloes arter yer's shed yo' sins in dis heah river. Dey's perfectly eye-tight an' nobody can't git a peep in, 'ceptin' de Lawd o' course, an' nothin' ain't no treat to Him, so dey'se really mighty private an' convenient at baptizin's."

Cherub looked puzzled. "But what is a baptizing? I don't understand that either." Then sadly, "Lella Byrd's right, I guess. I don't seem to understand anything since Rosemother stopped explaining everything to me. She was such a nice explainer."

"Law, honey-chile," Uncle Cis said gently, noticing her distress, "doan yer fret; I doan 'spec' nothin' better when yer was raised whar *you* was; when yer has 'sociated wid us Quality mo' yer'll improve."

"Good mornin', Brudder Cicero Cæsar," a


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new arrival broke in, appearing suddenly from out the bushes. "Does the Lawd need two mo' meddlin' Christian hands?" holding up two huge black paws as he spoke.

"Sho'ly, brudder, sho'ly," Uncle Cis replied, smiling benignly. "I speaks fer Him an' in de name of de Church, so jes jine de udders an' he'p disarrange things as much as yer kin."

The new arrival joined the score of earnest workers who, by now, had begun to drive eight small forked tree-trunks at intervals of about three feet into the ground on the edge of the river. These they quickly joined by laying sapling cross-poles into the forks, thus forming a framework upon which they began piling the bushes.

"But come, Little Mis'," Uncle Cis said to Cherub, "ef yer wants to he'p yer'll have to hurry, fer we'se almos' done," and Cherub joined Lella Byrd and Ro who were still busy picking up bushes, while Uncle Cis went down into the water where several other negroes were damming up a shallow place, thus making a pool in the river near the shore.



They all worked like beavers, some of them building the dam while others decorated it with blossoming boughs of dog-wood.

"Law, brudderin an' frien's to de Lawd," Uncle Cis commented, as the dam was completed and the last bough stuck into it, "we'se done ourse'fs proud to-day. Dis am a gloriumfacious Baptist pool," surveying it proudly, "an' dem arbors perspires yo ve'y soul, I declar dey do!"

"Amen, amen, brudder!" the workers agreed in a solemn chorus.

"Will dar be many to come into de blessed fole to-day?" the latest comer asked fervently.

"Law, yes, brudder," Uncle Cicero answered joyfully. "Countin' back-sliders an' all we'se made about three dozen convicts!"

"Yer doan say so!" the other exclaimed impressed.

"Yassuh, three dozen souls convicted unto de Lawd," Uncle Cicero affirmed. "Why dis heah revival's been a regular slaughter house fer de Devil dis week, what wid lambs an' goats confessin' deir sins, an' a' turnin' from de worl' of fleshy-devils an' callin' on Gawd

fer supper an' strength! Three dozen souls to have deir sins washed away!" he reiterated.

"Goody!" Lella Byrd exclaimed in a whisper, "there'll be lots of ducking," then turning to the boy suddenly and speaking in an eager voice as an idea popped into her head she said, "Rochellesalts, you're going to have your sins washed away to-day, too, ain't you?"

"Why, no, I reckon not, Lel'byrd," he said, appalled by the suggestion.

"Well, you better," she admonished. "I would if I was you, for you surely don't want to go down to everlastingly perditioning torment."

"But Lel'byrd, I'se skeered!"

"Skeered!" she scorned. "The idea! You oughter be ashamed of yourself! I certainly would be baptized."

"Then why don't you be?" Dorothy broke in, trying as usual to help the little negro out.

"Oh, if I was a Baptist I would," she answered quickly; "but you see I'm a 'piscopalian and don't believe in it."

"Heah comes all de folks," Ro interrupted, glad of the opportunity to change the sub-

ject, and looking up the others too saw, close at hand, dozens of men and women crowding towards them. They laughed and jostled each other as they pushed forward, and vehicles of all sizes and shapes came rocking along not far behind.

The horses and mules that drew them were soon hitched to nearby trees on either side of the road, and their occupants swelled the excited throng gathering along the river-bank.

The converts in a group by themselves, with wide smiles and rolling eyes, now came up, elbowed their way through the crowd and lined themselves near the bush arbors, singing a minor chant as they came.

"Glory Hallelujah!" Uncle Cis suddenly shouted, as behind everyone else he caught sight of a tall, lanky negro, "heah come Brud-der Brown, de Lawd's anointed."

The assemblage respectfully parted and Brother Brown, Bible in hand, stepped forward.

All the members of the Bornagain Bethlehem Baptist Church were much impressed with and stood in great awe of Brother Brown;

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for he, their newly-acquired preacher, was not only an educated man who could read and write and use marvelous words of magnitude, but he was a great exhorter too, and as such had brought more sinners to the mourners' bench since his arrival among them than any other preacher they had ever had; and, besides that, he was the one who had done more toward helping Uncle Cis raise funds for the erection of a new church, soon to be built in their midst, than anyone else. And now they were to see him perform the ceremony of baptism for the first time.

"Glory-goodness-gracious-gladness!" a happy sister on the edge of the crowd sang out. "Dis am a Hallelujah heavenly sight!"

"Amen, amen," the congregation burst forth, beginning to rock to and fro in a body.

Brother Brown, with a pompous inclining of his head in acknowledgment of their respect, passed on and joined the line of converts; then facing about towards the expectant congregation he held up his hand majestically.

"Brothers; likewise sisters," he said in a deep musical voice as a hush fell upon them. "I am

here to-day to wash these sinners' sins whiter than the driven snow, purer than the purest lily; that is," he conceded magnanimously, "with the help of this river and the Lord. But before I begin I have a sumptuous and sweet surprise to make known unto you."

He paused impressively, and a murmur of admiration ran through the crowd.

"It will surprise you as it has me, and doubtless Him," and he paused again as a moan broke the stillness and Lella Byrd's mammy, mother of Rochellesalts, pushed her way to the front.

"Come, sadly suffering sister, come," Brother Brown called to her, and taking her hand in his led her dramatically to the head of the converts' line.

She moaned and groaned and beat her hands upon her breast, swaying more and more from side to side as an exclamation of amazement swept over the on-lookers.

"Yea, children of my Shepherd's flock," the minister resumed, "it is our immortal and prodigious Sister Johnson, and no wonder that your souls shout in sweet surprise; for until

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last night she stood amongst you a perforated, perjured Pharisee; a doubting sinner lost in darkness."

"Amen! Amen!" the congregation burst out. "Oh, Lord, save her soul!"

"Yea, a worker of witchcraft, a helper of hoodoos, a stander-up of the emblems of the evil one! But now," and he spread out his arms in a gesture of forgiveness, "the awakening dawn of day hath broke for her, and her spirit is coming through to join forevermore the royal ranks of our loving Lord!"

"Glory, Gl-o-ry! Oh, my soul!" Sister Johnson sing-songed, swaying faster from side to side.

"And no more will she be a stumbling stone for sinners' souls; no more will she scatter condemnation and putrefaction abroad the earth's bosom."

"No, my Lawd!"

"No more will she sin against the solemn charity and religious rituals of the Christian Church."

"Amen, Lawd, my soul's on fire!"

"For me and the Lord have showed her the light."

"Yas, Lawd! Glory Hallelujah, yas!" she shouted, rocking back and forth still faster.

"And now, Sister, tell your excellent experience; tell of your beautiful birth into the bosom of blessedness."

He paused with eyes uplifted, and Sister Johnson took a step forward.

"I was a sinner," she intoned, fairly singing her words now as she continued to sway, "yas, I was a sinner."

"Yas, Lawd," the congregation affirmed.

"I was a sinner, but I made up my mind to git religion whether I believed or not, fer I was a sinner."

"Amen, Lawd!"

"Yas, I was a sinner. All my fambly got it fust an' I was de onlyest wild goat lef' in de fole, fer I was a sinner."

"Forgive, Lawd!"

"Yas, I was a sinner, but I done done what de Lawd done tole me to do, an' I'se done come thru', an' moved de speerit—fer I was a sinner."

"She shall be washed whiter than the spirit's snow," Brother Brown interrupted in a thunderous voice, as wail after wail went up from the excited throng. "So come down into the water, Sister, and be purified."

"Yas, Lawd, I come!" Sister Johnson shouted gladly, and he led her from the river bank down into the river midst the dogwood boughs, while the crowd on the bank continued its fervent exclamations in rhythm to their swaying back and forth.

"Sister Cleopatra Queen Victoria Johnson," Brother Brown demanded, holding her rigidly in the middle of the pool, "do you confess your soul's salvation and perjure your perdition in this washing away of your sin and shame, and freely fling it forever away, and confess yourself in a satisfactory abandonment unto your Maker."

"Yas, Lawd," she sobbed hysterically.

"And do you die to live again?" he thundered, holding her more firmly.

"Yas, Lawd, I'se done died, I'se done died, I'se done died de simple death an' rose in de speerit of Gawd."

"Amen, then, my sister," and he dipped her beneath the surface of the water.

The watchers broke forth into a high-pitched, wailing chant, and as the preacher lifted Sister Johnson up she began to shout, splashing about and splattering everyone within reach.

"Oh, Glory! Glory! Glory! Glory! I'se so happy, I'se so happy!" and she broke away from Brother Brown's restraining hands, and flopped back beneath the water. The congregation gave a sudden shout of terror, and Uncle Cis waded in and grabbed her, and with his help the minister once more got her above the surface where she again struggled to free herself.

"Now jes yer whoa dar, Sister," Uncle Cis admonished. "Whoa!" and he and Brother Brown held her firmly.

"Oh, I'se so happy!" she shouted, regaining her breath and splashing as much as she could. "Glory! Glory! Glory! Glory! I'se done died de simple death an' rose in de speerit of Gawd!"

"Sister, thy multitudinous sins have been for-

given thee!" Brother Brown announced solemnly. "So shut up thy mouth and go in peace!" and so saying he and Uncle Cis led her up the bank. She continued to shout and struggle, but as they reached the top two other sisters stepped forward and putting their arms about her led her sobbing into the nearest bush arbor.

The congregation burst into an even wilder chant than before, and convert after convert descended into the river. Then, after an appropriate exordium, duly baptized, they came forth, wet but rejoicing.

There was something solemn and impressive about it all in spite of its element of comedy, the negroes were so eager and earnest, and Cherub, looking on with the other two children, felt silenced and awe-struck.

"Now, Ro," Lella Byrd whispered, "here's your chance. Jump in and be washed whiter than the driven snow."

He looked at her wistfully. "No, Lel'byrd, I dassn't, kase I'se skeered!"

"Why Rochellesalts Paregoric Johnson!"

she shamed him. "Skeered to get rid of your sins?"

"No'am, I'se skeered of de water!"

"The water?" she scoffed. "The water can't hurt you! Don't you want to go to heaven when you die, and 'with the angels sing, a crown upon your forehead, and a harp within your hand'?" she quoted persuasively.

"Yassum, but——"

"And you'll be free from all sin there, and have golden hair and fluffy wings."

"Yassum, I knows, but——"

"Then jump!" she cried mischievously, and gave him a push that sent him sprawling into the water at Brother Brown's feet.

He disappeared for the fraction of a second, then came to the surface, gasping and spluttering.

The minister, seeing in his arrival only the timely hand of a guiding Providence, grabbed him up and holding him out bodily towards the astonished audience announced solemnly, "The Lord is not satisfied with the goats only that we have baptized here to-day, but sends unto us a little ewe-lamb to add unto His flock, and

so," holding the dazed boy more firmly, "He hath dropped him into the holy pool. Therefore, Lord," rolling his eyes up prayerfully, "I concentrate him herewith unto Thee," and he straightway proceeded to dip him under again and make Rochellesalts Paregoric Johnson a member in good and regular standing of the Bornagain Bethlehem Baptist Church.

"Lawdy!" Lella Byrd giggled, as a few moments later the congregation gathered singing about the frightened pickaninny when he was led, dripping, to the land. "That's the seriousest joke I ever played, but it's funny just the same!"

"I don't think so at *all*!" Dorothy exclaimed indignantly, speaking for the first time since she had begun watching the whole strange scene of the baptism, "And now Ro's all wet!" and she ran up to him while Lella Byrd followed, reaching him just as he broke away from the other negroes and went towards a bush arbor.

"Say, Ro," Lella Byrd greeted him, "you did it rather well for you; but how does it feel to be a saved Baptist, anyhow?" and she gig-

gled, again fingering his shirt-sleeve to see how wet he really was.

"Hit feel pow'ful damp an' chilly, Lel'-byrd," he answered meekly, looking up at her with big eyes that still held a trace of the fright he had felt while in the water, "an' I wish I had some dry breeches."

"Nonsense!" she scolded. "Don't complain so much; you ought to feel thankful over being saved, and thank me for making you be, too, instead of complaining! Besides you'll soon get dry—but Lawdy goodness! look there, Cherub," pointing to the road, then jumping out of sight behind the bush arbor.

Dorothy looked and saw her grandfather on horseback only a few yards away. His expression was more kindly than she had ever seen it as he sat watching the negroes, while Brother Brown brought the day's ceremony to a close and they began to scatter, most of them starting slowly off in the direction of the children's hiding place.

Cherub, with a bound, followed Lella Byrd quickly behind the arbor, and Ro joined them, not in the least understanding why they were

hiding, but scenting an adventure and at once interested.

"Now we'd better beat it," Lella Byrd whispered, "before he sees us; and, besides, this is a good time to slip on the boat before they get there," and she dropped on all fours and began crawling rapidly along behind a clump of bushes. Cherub started after her, then suddenly stood up and began walking deliberately.

"What you doing that for, you goose," Lella Byrd said, trying to pull her down again. "He'll see you!"

"I don't care if he does!" she exclaimed, and glanced defiantly in the direction of her grandfather. "I'll run away, but I won't *crawl* away!" and she continued walking deliberately, looking back from time to time to see if she were watched by him, or by the slowly moving crowd of negroes.

Colonel Nelson, amused in watching the excited throng, had not noticed the children, and they went safely on until lost to view behind a strip of woodland.

"I declare, Cherub," Lella Byrd grumbled, "you almost spoiled everything by being so

silly! S'pose they'd seen us; we never would have gone on the excursion."

"Well, I won't crawl anyhow, I tell you, and——"

"Well, hush up and come on," Lella Byrd interrupted. "You talk too much. Here's the boat," and they ran helter-skelter out of the woods on to the long, low river wharf to which a small sidewheel steamer was tied.

"Ain't it lubly!" Ro ejaculated, as he caught sight of the prow adorned with an aged wooden swan, the end of an anchor chain which it had swallowed in its wild youth coming from its mouth.

"Now, Ro," Lella Byrd said, stopping suddenly and taking hold of the boy's shoulder and looking him in the eyes, "if I let you go on this excursion what you going to do for *me?*"

"I doan know, Lel'byrd," he faltered.

"You don't know?" she repeated questioningly. "Then you can't go."

"But Lel'byrd, Mammy say I could."

"*Mammy* said you could!" she exclaimed scornfully, "what's she got to do with it! I'm

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the one that lets you do things—ain't I? Don't you sass *me*, or I'll hoo-doo you."

"Yas, Lel'byrd," he answered meekly, looking with anxiety at the inviting gang plank before him.

"Well, then," she said, "swear you'll bury my dead kitten, the next time I have one, of course, in the middle of a real grave-yard on a Friday at the full o' the moon *without your rabbit's foot*. Do you swear?"

"Oh Gawd, Lel'byrd," he trembled, fearfully.

"*Do you swear?*" she repeated, slowly emphasizing each word.

"Yassum, yassum, but——"

"Then do it!"

He hesitated, rolling his eyes first towards the boat, then towards Lella Byrd.

"I'll help you," Cherub whispered, "so don't be scared."

He looked his gratitude, and said solemnly: "Dern, double dern, gosh, darn, damn!" crossing his heart with both his little black hands."

"All right, you can come now," Lella Byrd

consented, running up the plank to the boat, followed by the other two.

"Now, Ro, you sit on deck; me and Cherub's going to hide downstairs. And don't you come poking your nose around hunting for us either. We'll come up when the boat starts; they can't put us off then."

"Yassum," he agreed, content in the certain knowledge now that he was really going on the excursion.

Lella Byrd and Cherub scrambled down the narrow hatch-way and hid themselves in the stuffy cabin just as the happy holiday crowd broke through the woods, and with much laughter and singing surged out upon the wharf and on to the boat.

CHAPTER VIII

"WHEW! My legs feel all warped like Ro's," Lella Byrd exclaimed, as with a sigh of relief she stood up from behind one of the shabby cabin seats where she and Cherub had been patiently squatting. "Come on, let's go upstairs with the other niggers."

"Is it safe?" Cherub asked, raising herself up also and looking about.

"I reckon so," she answered, starting towards the steps that led to the deck. "I hear the hants breathing, so we've started all right."

"Hear the hants breathing!" Dorothy repeated, joining her. "What hants? Where?"

"The water hants and ghosts of the drowned that push the boat along," Lella Byrd explained, as she started to run up the cabin steps.

Cherub paused, puzzled as usual.

"Now look here, Cherub," Lella Byrd said, stopping and making a bored gesture, "don't

tell me you don't understand something again."

Dorothy shook her head. "Well, I don't," she said.

"It does seem to me you're the ignorantest person I ever knew; but I reckon you can't help it, as Uncle Cis says," the other replied. "The water hants and ghosts of the drowned push the wheels of this boat around in the water and make it go; understand? Otherwise we'd just stand here all day. And as they push the wheels around they breathe awful hard, 'cause it's hard work, and that's the 'chug-chug, chug-chug' that you hear. Now come on, let's go upstairs."

"But I want to see them doing it," Dorothy objected, again looking about the cabin and suddenly spying the little port-hole near by. "Here's the very thing; I'll look out," and she quickly clambered on the nearest seat and would have stuck her head through the hole, but Lella Byrd grabbed her from behind and pulled her down bodily.

"The idea!" she exclaimed, hanging grimly to Dorothy as they both fell to the floor. "Do

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you want to bring bad luck on this whole 'scusion? Hold still!"

"I won't!" Dorothy struggled angrily, freeing herself and immediately jumping upon the seat again and this time sticking her head out of the hole.

"Oh, Lella Byrd, it's beautiful!" she exclaimed, at once forgetting her anger as she caught sight of the water whirling and foaming just below her, tossed up by the wheel in a lace-like spray that sparkled, myriad-colored, in the sunshine. "Why, there are millions of little fairies down there in the water, Lella Byrd," drawing her head in, "and *they* are pushing the wheel around. It can't be hants and drowned spirits, it's too pretty. You just look!" and she made room for the other child by her side.

Lella Byrd looked interested but did not move.

"Hello, little-fairies-that-live-in-the-rainbow!" Cherub called, laughing and sticking her head further out the hole. "I love you, I love you!"

"Oh, shucks," Lella Byrd exclaimed, irri-

tated but curious. "I don't believe you see any fairies!"

"Yes I do, too," Dorothy answered, "or at least they look like fairies *should* look, anyway. Come and see."

Lella Byrd hesitated a moment more, then clasping her rabbit's foot firmly in one hand climbed up and looked out.

"Now, doesn't it look like dancing rainbow-fairies?"

"No," Lella Byrd said, disgustedly. "It don't look like nothing but soapy water. I'm going upstairs," and she jumped down and made for the steps once more.

Cherub gave one more look at the dancing spray, then reluctantly got down and followed her. They climbed the steps rapidly and their two heads appeared above the hatchway at the same moment.

"Good Lawd, look a'yonder," Uncle Cis cried, as he stood a few yards away with a group of other excursionists who spied them also, and with him crowded forward excitedly.

Rochellesalts, still wet and shivering, ran to

the side of the hatch and waited, while the two girls climbed up onto the deck.

"Chillens," Uncle Cis exclaimed, "what do dis mean? How come you-alls to come, humph?"

Lella Byrd giggled with glee, but evading his question called out gaily, "Hello everybody! Ain't you tickled to death to see us?" and sauntered nearer the gaping negroes.

Some of them laughed at this, for in spite of the fact that she was continually getting them in trouble by her mischievousness, Lella Byrd Lawson was a general favorite throughout the several plantations situated near her aunt's; but others amongst them frowned and began muttering as she stood grinning impishly. Dorothy noticed this, and, feeling ill at ease, half wished she had not come.

"Now look here, niggers," Lella Byrd said, laughing and addressing those who were scowling, "don't be cranky! We ain't going to hurt you," persuasively, "and you know you can't put us off now, nohow. Besides, just you think," she appealed, "how awful bad you'd feel if you'd never been a nigger, like me and

Cherub, and had never been on a 'scusion in all your life!" There was a sympathetic stir, and seeing this she continued, "I really don't see why we shouldn't come—do you, Uncle Cis?" suddenly addressing the old man who she knew was always a friend to children, black or white.

"Why no, honey, I don't, I really don't," he answered.

"But, my dear young lady," Brother Brown interrupted, having heard the commotion and now pushing forward with exaggerated importance, "did you not know before you came that this was a glad gathering, a happy holiday," making a flourishing gesture, "for the *élite* Ethiopians of the colored circles *only*?"

Lella Byrd flushed for a moment with instinctive anger at his manner, but reflecting that it might still be possible for them to be put off, said in a wheedling tone, ready as always with a plausible argument, "Yes, Brother Brown, I did know it, but I'll tell you though my face may be white my heart feels colored and I love to be with colored

folks. Don't I, Uncle Cis?" again appealing to him.

"Law yes, baby-chile, yer sho does;" then addressing the preacher, "an' I really doan see how-come dar kin be no objections to dese chillens nohow. As dis one say," patting Lella Byrd fondly, "dey maybe is white, but deir hearts is black as yours mos' likely an' we ain't got no right, as I kin see, to detain 'em from de enjoymint of dis 'scusion when de Lord let 'em come.

"Very well then, very well, the Lord sometimes knows best," Brother Brown answered resignedly, himself entirely good-natured and only too anxious to let the boat continue on its way; for the carrying out of a daring plan he had been laying for many weeks depended upon his safe and speedy arrival in Mobile.

The mutterings of the darkies who had seemed about to raise objections ceased at this, for after all they felt that their beloved leader was a person worthy of deciding questions for them, and therefore most of them began to scatter good-naturedly, while only a few grumblers remained about the children.

"Cherub," Lella Byrd began, "if I let you go on this 'scusion what you going to——"

"Lawdy Lel'byrd!" a tall yellow woman interrupted, bustling up just then and holding her hands in a gesture of surprise. "Whar in de worl' did *you* come frum? I'se so surprised my heart's got the itch! Lawd!" and she clasped her hands over her left side dramatically.

"Now, Mammy—Sister Johnson, I mean," Lella Byrd drawled mischievously, "don't lie. Where's that wedding veil?"

Sister Johnson blushed mentally and looked quickly about her. "Law, Brudder Brown," she said, catching sight of him still standing near, "I doan know what dat gal's talkin' 'bout, an' doan yer believe her kase it ain't so!"

Lella Byrd laughed heartily. "That wedding veil that I gave you to let us——"

"Brudder Brown, he'p me downstairs, quick! I feels faint," and taking his arm Sister Johnson hurried him vigorously out of earshot before the sentence was finished.

Lella Byrd again laughed and turning took

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hold of Cherub, drawing her forward. "Well, dear friends," she said in a teasing tone to the few remaining negroes, "you-alls just as well get over your crankiness I reckon, for me and Cherub's going on this excursion, or I'll know why. You know which way my window faces, and *I* know who loves chicken in this here crowd, and so——"

But she got no farther, for they suddenly became good-natured and cordial as if by magic, while Uncle Cis bent almost double with mirth at the clever threat. Then they all moved away down the deck, leaving the children standing in a group to themselves.

"Ro," said Lella Byrd, wheeling on the pickaninny who had stood shivering through the whole of the controversy, "what you scrooching and shaking like that for? Humph? Stop it; you look like a rabbit's nose!"

"Ya-a-sum," he chattered, "I knows I does, but I'se so cole, Lel'byrd."

"Cold? Nonsense!" she scoffed.

"But he is cold, Lella Byrd," Cherub put in; "he's still all wet."

"Well," Lella Byrd replied, "that's not my

fault, is it? I didn't advise him being a Baptist or coming on this excursion either, did I?"

"I think we'd better run around the deck, Ro," Dorothy advised. "That'll get you warm."

He hesitated. "Kin I, Lel'byrd?"

"Yep," Lella Byrd consented generously. "I'll race you," and all three of them started racing pell-mell 'round and 'round the little steamer. The negroes sat or strolled about in groups, save for Sister Johnson and Brother Brown, who having returned to the deck stood together, apart from the others, talking earnestly. Occasionally some one in the laughing crowd would start up a high-pitched song, and one after another would join in until presently it swelled out into a weird, half-wild chorus of quaint melody that went echoing and re-echoing from shore to shore, and then beyond, until it lulled itself to sleep among the distant trees. The bright spring sunshine streamed down, and the care-free excursionists were chug-chugged nearer and nearer Mobile, the Mecca of their day-dreams.

"Here we are, hooray!" Lella Byrd yelled, jumping up and down in her excitement as the *Dixie-Swan*, panting and blowing from its undue efforts, made its way slowly to the wharf where eager hands were waiting, upheld, to catch the mooring ropes just being loosened. Those were soon cast off, writhed and hissed in mid-air like huge serpents for several moments, uncoiled themselves, then ceasing their struggles were caught and tied to the waiting posts on the dock.

Lella Byrd hung farther and farther over the rail, absorbed in watching them dock the steamer. "Gee, wasn't that fine! That's the way the Devil's going to rope you in some day, Ro, if you ever backslide."

Ro crossed himself with his rabbit foot and looked concerned.

"Is this Mobile?" Cherub asked. "It's so funny! What's all those things there, and there, and there, Lella Byrd?" pointing to the bales of last year's cotton still awaiting shipment, the big scales, oyster dredges, and all the various paraphernalia that littered the wharf. "I never saw so many queer things!"

"Queer?" Lella Byrd caught her up sharply. "I don't see nothing queer; it's just Mobile. But look yonder at that fruiter. Ain't she a jim-dandy!"

"Law, Lel'byrd," Ro exclaimed, himself catching sight of the big fruit boat tied to the dock forward of them. "Doan dem 'nanas jes' make de tears come in yo' mouf?"

Dorothy laughed, and they all three leaned farther over the rail watching a number of negro men throwing huge bunches of bananas from the boat onto the wharf where others caught and separated them, casting out the green ones from the ripe like the Scriptural goats from the lambs of heaven. Soon, however, the gang-plank of their own boat was lowered and the negroes began shoving and pushing each other good-naturedly, all trying to disembark at the same moment.

"Here you, Rochellesalts!" his mother admonished, making her way to him through the crowd with Brother Brown in tow. "Hurry an' git off, you an' de gals," and she grabbed him by the ear.

The crowd pushed harder and harder from

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behind and, losing her grip, and her temper as well, she began scolding loudly. "Heah, yer good-fer-nothin', no-'count, bow-legged, wall-eyed, black-debil-of-a-rascal, doan yer pull away from me!" and reaching him again she gave his ear such a twist that he did break away from her, squealing, and stumbled down the gang-way.

"I declar fo' Gawd," she exclaimed crossly, "dat nigger's a reg'lar pestitution, an' makes me lose my 'ligion 'bout a billion times a day! But come on, dear Leader," turning to Brother Brown, "an' you gals," speaking to the two other children, "git offen here in double-quick time, yer heah? We ain't got all day!" and hanging on to her escort she hurried down the gang-plank, preceded by Dorothy and Lella Byrd.

"Mammy," Rochellesalts pleaded as they reached him, "buy me a 'nana, my little belly's so flat!"

She glared at him a moment in silence, then said, cuffing at him as he dodged out of her way, "Shut up! I ain't gwine to. Does yer

'spec' me to bring yer all dis way on a 'scusion an' *feed* yer too?"

He began to whimper, and Cherub pushed her way closer to him to comfort him.

"My son," put in Brother Brown pompously, "I fear thou art of the earth earthy, and hungrieth after the greed and lust of this world. Now thou shouldst look more to thy Maker for succor and strength."

"I doan want no sucker, I wants a 'nana," he bawled. "I'se hongry!"

"Well, don't cry, Ro," Cherub urged. "I'll try to get you one."

"How?" he asked quickly, taking his fist from one large hopeful eye, but continuing to dig at the other as he caught his breath between sobs.

"Doan yer do nothin' of de kin', chile," Sister Johnson said, taking Brother Brown's proffered arm and beginning to move majestically away. "He ain't wuth hit," and she left the children and joined the surging crowds that were now making their way up the wharf to the street beyond.

"I wants a 'nana!" cried Ro in an injured wail.

"Shut up, you cry-baby-blubber-brat!" Lella Byrd exclaimed, shaking him, herself hungry and as disappointed as he. "Nobody but you would want to eat heathen bananas from foreign lands nohow. Come on!" and she started after the disappearing couple.

"Wait, Lella Byrd," Dorothy commanded, "and I'll see if that man over there," pointing, "won't swap me some bananas for my ring," and over she flew to the nearest group of workmen.

"The idea!" Lella Byrd exclaimed, and turning fiercely upon the little pickaninny said, "You ought to be ashamed to act like you are! Don't you know God's watching you, and——"

"Law, Lella Byrd," the boy interrupted, rolling his eyes in sudden excitement and whispering hoarsely, "dar ain't no Gawd, kase one of dem sailer mens tole me so!"

Lella Byrd gasped in horror. "There ain't no Gawd? Did he say that?"

"Yassum, he say jes like dis, 'Dar ain't no Gawd!'"

"Good Lord, Ro, what in the world did you say?"

"I say, 'I doan kere.'"

* * * * *

"I've got 'em, I've got 'em," Cherub cried running back, her two hands full of over-squeezed bananas. "Here, Ro," and she dumped them into his outstretched black ones.

"Lawdy, Cherub," Lella Byrd said, "you've got too many for Ro; it would make him sick," and she grabbed some of them away from him.

Rochellesalts began cramming a whole one in his mouth with much noise, and beamed with satisfaction. "Hit makes my little belly jes laugh, I declar hit do," he commented thickly. "Dey's good as Jedgemint day, ain't 'em, Lel'byrd?"

"You bet," she agreed, smiling, but trying desperately at the same instant to chink up the smile. "But come on, let's go with Mammy now," and she ran across the wharf. "Mammy, Mammy," she called, "wait a minute, we're coming with you," and they raced on up

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to the woman's side. "Where you going anyhow?"

Sister Johnson looked at her escort questioningly, then as he nodded in answer, she giggled, "Me an' my finiky gwine to de jewel-me-shop."

"Your finiky?" Lella Byrd caught at the word, as they all went up the street together.

"Yassum, dis gemmen dat I'se promised to deevide my vittels wid fer wosser or better. We'se gwine git married!"

"Married?" Dorothy exclaimed.

"Well, I might have known it," Lella Byrd commented. "I dreamed of a death, and my yellow chicken laid a guinea egg, and I've never known either sign to fail. But why didn't you tell me, Mammy, when I gave you the wedding veil?"

"Law, chile, I didn't know hit fo' sho' myse'f den. I didn't git 'ligion till I made certain of dat veil nohow and I didn't git engaged till I got 'ligion," and she pressed Brother Brown's arm affectionately. "It happen like dis," she confided, looking up at him coyly. "Brudder Brown he come along to

rassel wid my sinful soul las' night, an' pretty soon he sot hit on fire wid his flamin' words of brimstone an' ashes. Den I up an' feed his weary spirit on cole poke-pie, an' he say, 'Sister Johnson, I could chaw yo' pastry all day long an' forever,' or somethin' like dat—didn't yer?" appealing to him. He nodded grandly, and she continued, "An' so den I jes lay my haid on his shoulder, an' made myse'f at home about his pusson an' said, 'Awright,' timid-like, an' we was affiliated an' financiered befo' we knowed it. Warn't we?"

"I redeemed her soul," Brother Brown affirmed in a sonorous voice, "and gave it unto the Lord, and lo! he gave it back unto me for safe-keeping. Glory be to me and the Lord!"

"Well, then, we'll go to the jewelry shop, too," Lella Byrd offered blandly, and the little procession quickened its pace up the sandy street where lay, here and there, piles of Mobile oyster shells ripening in the sun. Occasionally a laborer or two would saunter leisurely by on his way to the docks, but nowhere was there any sign of bustle or hurry; for this was Mo-

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bile and a perpetual springtime calm rested over everything.

"I really doan see how-come you to be enamelled of me though, Brudder Brown," his fiancée remarked modestly. "I sho'ly don't, kase I'se so unlearnt in eddication an' doan know nothin'."

"Thou knowest a plentiful measure, Sister," he comforted her. "I do not approve of educational glory for ladies. It makes them too apt to interfere with man, the Lord's superior creature, and try to do things for which they are unfitted. Your sweet simplicity suits me best," and he looked about him rather uneasily at the crowd of negroes who had now surged on ahead and were making their way up the main street of the town.

"Yes, sah, dat's so," Sister Johnson agreed. "Us ladies weren't made of nothin' but a rib nohow, an' some tries to be de whole carcus! But I'se not dat kine; I never knows nothin's I ought to, an'——"

"I believe you," he interrupted her, giving a haughty glance at the listening children still trotting by their sides; "otherwise I would

not this day be taking you to myself as I am now doing, and placing upon your finger the beautiful band of brideship; but here we are at our desired destitution," and he paused in front of a brick aristocrat standing proudly between two frame stores.

The crowd surged on up the street, eager to gorge itself to the full on the exciting sights of the city, while Brother Brown escorted the giggling Sister Johnson up the jeweler's steps and on into the glistening shop, tagged after by the three curious children. "Good morning, fine morning," he said with much pompousness of tone and manner to the clerk who appeared to wait upon them. "Show me emblems of the holy state of matrimony, please."

The clerk looked at the tall, over-dressed negro and the snickering woman on his arm, and then, with an amused twinkle which he suppressed with difficulty, asked soberly: "Safety pins or wedding rings?"

"Wedding rings, and of your finest finish," Brother Brown answered, jingling his pockets.

The clerk drew a tray of plain wide gold rings from the case and placed it before them.

"Would you prefer twenty carat, or twenty-two?"

Brother Brown looked up disdainfully. "I prefer gold, young man, and I can pay for it, too," jingling his pockets more loudly than ever; then, "How do you like this one, dearie?" choosing the broadest of the bands and holding it out towards his companion.

"It's jes gran'," she whispered, almost overcome with delight but beaming broadly; then with more courage, as he slipped it upon her finger, "My heart's so tickled hit feels jes like my foot's asleep. Lawd!" and she "ha-ha'd" noisily.

"That ring's fifteen dollars," the clerk warned.

"No matter," Brother Brown remarked. "It will serve the purpose," and he drew a bag of silver dollars from his pocket.

The children's and Sister Johnson's eyes almost popped from their heads as they saw the pile Brother Brown counted out upon the counter.

"Any marking?" the clerk asked, gathering it up with an amused smile.

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"Yes, oh yes, certainly," the negro assented. "From B. B. D. D. H. E. C. G. G. S. H. T. A. T. L. A.—"

"Goodness alive, hold on there!" the clerk burst out, laughing. "I can't put all that in. Can't you just use your pet-name? What's it all mean, anyway?"

"It stands," said Brother Brown, with injured dignity, "for my name, my holy calling, and my Alma Mater: Bartholomew Brown, Doctor of Divinity of the High Educational College of Glory, the Grand Supreme Holy Trinity Association, and the True Light Army—but no matter," with a wave of his hand, "we will take it unmarked. Show me watches. You keep dotted-swiss works, I suppose?"

"Yes, oh yes," the clerk answered, imitating the negro's tone and manner. "We keep a very fine line of them," and he turned his back as he reached for a tray.

Brother Brown's long black hand shot out quickly just at the right moment, and before the clerk had turned around again had deposited something gold and shining in his pocket.

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"How about these?" the clerk asked, placing the watches before him.

Sister Johnson, who had been showing her ring to the eager-eyed children, now uttered an exclamation of delight as she caught sight of the tray's contents, and pushed nearer the counter. Brother Brown, pleasantly aware of the impression he was making and of the fact that he had performed his favorite lifting trick unobserved, became more pompous than ever.

"How would this one please you, dearie?" picking up the largest watch of those before him, and handing it to the astonished negress.

"Fer what?" she asked, dazed, taking hold of it mechanically.

"For a bridal gift upon the nuptials of our wedding day; but does it please your fastidious fancy?" bending nearer her.

"Do it?" she burst out finally with an excited ha-ha, "Lawdy, nigger, I ain't no fool," and she clasped it to her breast, swaying back and forth. "Why," she addressed the whole group, "it's so gran' dat I jes can't believe dat my luck won't change an' somebody git it away frum me. Lawd, Brudder Brown," and she

laughed loudly again, "I'd marry yer two or t'ree times fer dis!"

He smiled grandly. "I'll take this one then," he said to the clerk, "as long as the lady seems to rather fancy it."

Lella Byrd giggled mischievously, unable to remain silent another second. "Bet you it ain't as fine as Mammy Caroline's," she said, well knowing the jealousy that had always existed between the two.

Sister Johnson turned on her fiercely, still clasping the treasure to her bosom.

"Humph," she said scornfully, "hers ain't purely golden like dis, *I* bet!"

"Yes it is, too."

She looked at hers again, then said triumphantly, "Well, maybe de outsides of hers *is* purely golden like dis, but I bet de *guts* is *brass!*"

"How much?" Brother Brown asked the smiling clerk, pulling a roll of bills from his pockets and throwing them nonchalantly upon the counter.

"Twenty-eight," the clerk answered. "We make no discount to royalty." Then seeing

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that he needed change he turned his back to the counter once more.

"Let the children observe its elegance more closely, dearie," Brother Brown said, and as the woman stooped to obey his hand shot out, then back to his pocket, again successful.

The clerk handed him the change, and taking Sister Johnson's arm they all left the store. "Now children," he said graciously, stopping just outside, "we have an important engagement which we must hurry to fulfill. If you'll remain here," pointing to a candy shop next door to the store from which they had just come, "we will return for you later," and he handed them some small change and with his companion turned and walked rapidly away.

"I think I'll buy that goobersnap there," Lella Byrd announced, pointing to a florid box of peanut brittle, "Come on, let's go in," and they started to enter, when Ro cried suddenly, "Oh Gawd, Cherub, look yander! hit's yo' gran'paw!"

The girls looked quickly in the direction that the negroes had gone just in time to see

Brother Brown lean nearer Sister Johnson and whisper something in her ear; then they both halted and spoke to Colonel Nelson, who was by now abreast of them.

"Good mornin', Marse Nelson," Sister Johnson greeted him, "you'se de veryest gem-man I wants to see," giggling and looking up at her companion. "Kin yer kinely lem'me have some money, sah, an' Miss Laura'll pay yer fer me. Me an' him," poking with her elbow the dignified dark gentleman at her side, "is gwine git married, an' that takes cash as well as love," ha-haing at her own joke.

Colonel Nelson smiled in kindly amusement, then let his eyes rest critically on those of the man. "Look here," he said, "who are you? A strange nigger in these parts, ain't you?"

"Yes sir, and also, no sir," he answered with an exaggeratedly respectful manner. "I am the new Baptist minister, the saver of sinful souls, sir, and the raiser of sumptuous sums for the erection of a new church, sir."

"Well, that doesn't recommend you to *me*," Colonel Nelson interrupted. "I've known too many scalawags in the same profession. What

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I want to know is whether you are up to any dirty work here," indicating Sister Johnson; "for if you are you'll have me to deal with, understand?" Then turning to her he continued, "I'll let you have the money, Sally, you know that, but are you sure this nigger here isn't trying to cheat you? What do you know about him, anyhow?"

Brother Brown started to protest, but Colonel Nelson silenced him with a wave of his hand, and taking some money from his pocket looked at the woman questioningly. "Ten dollars enough?"

She hesitated, then looked her companion up and down, critically, for the first time since she had known him. "Well now, Marse Nelson," she conceded reluctantly, "I reckon five's safer. I sho doan want too much money on my pusson wid a strange bride-groom aroun', no sir, I sho don't!"

"All right, here you are," the Colonel said, and handing her a bill he started up the street again towards the children, who still stood watching.

"And now we'll catch the first boat to New

Orleans, dearie, for we are going on a wonderful bridal trip," Brother Brown exclaimed, and hurried the half-dazed woman on down the street, casting furtive glances about him as he went.

"Lawdy goodness, Cherub, your grandpa's coming now, sho' 'nough," Lella Byrd said. "Let's hide! Quick!" and she jumped into the darkened deep-set doorway of the candy shop. Ro followed, his eyes rolling wildly.

For a moment Cherub hesitated, then throwing her little head in the air stood her ground in the middle of the sidewalk, her eyes flashing at her grandfather as they had done once before that morning, while two little danger signals began showing upon her cheeks.

Colonel Nelson, head held down and thinking deeply, did not notice her until he was very close. Then looking up and discovering who it was he stopped short. "Girl," he said, hardly believing his eyes even yet, "what are you doing here? Answer me!"

"I ran away with Lella Byrd Lawson," she answered with defiance. "Yes, and I'm glad, too," gaining courage as she went on, "for you

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are cruel to me and I *will* play with her; I will!" Her voice broke and she choked back a lump in her throat.

The Colonel stood aghast, at a loss what to answer. He realized that it was becoming harder and harder for him, each time that he saw this child, to feel the hatred towards her that he had felt ever since her birth. She attracted him, undeniably, with her "Nelson spirit" and the lovely look of her mother; yes, and her grandmother too, he decided; and at this thought his mind traveled swiftly back over the years since he and little Dorothy Parker had first seen each other when she too was a golden-haired child of six and he a boy of twelve. From that day he had loved her, he knew, and now, as he looked at their little granddaughter before him, his heart softened and his voice was almost tender as he spoke. "You are very naughty to have done such a thing," he said. "Where is Lella Byrd?"

Taken completely by surprise at his tone and changed manner, Cherub felt undecided what to say. She was ever ready to combat the grandfather she had heretofore known, but

this new, almost gentle grandfather baffled her and she did not reply.

"Answer me," he said more severely. "Where is Lella Byrd?"

"There!" she pointed; but at that moment Lella Byrd, seeing there was no escape and therefore determined to make the best of the situation, stepped from her hiding place boldly, saying with perfect composure, "Good morning, Colonel. Pretty day, ain't it?" Then the little pickaninny, scared, but her echo and shadow always, stepped out too and greeted him with a nod and grin.

The old Colonel looked at Lella Byrd and his lips twitched. Standing there, her mischievous face all aglow and her big dark eyes on his, he felt that he could not blame Dorothy for wanting to play with her. He knew she was the torment of his as well as her aunt's plantation, but she was attractive, the little gypsy! and his heart seemed to grow younger as he looked from one girl to the other, and he felt a sudden well of sympathy and understanding spring up in it and drown the anger he had felt. He controlled his expression,

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however, and said: "You are a bad girl to have come to Mobile! Did you come on the excursion with the negroes?"

She nodded assent.

"Does your Aunt Laura know it?"

"Not unless she's put two and two together," she answered, "as she 'most generally does, and knows that I'm somewhere I oughtn't to be!"

The Colonel looked as if he were going to smile, but bit his lip and frowned. "Well, you must all come home with me at once, except Ro, of course; he can stay."

"But I doan wanter stay, Marse Nelson, please, sah," he said drearily; "I feels sick an' wants to go home. My brains feels like scrambled eggs," putting his hand to his aching little head, "an' my belly's homesick."

"Very well, come," and he stepped to the curb and motioned a hopeful hackman who had been hanging around, calling at intervals, ever since he had seen him, "Bes' hack in town, Boss. Drive yer ev'ywhar yer wanter go fer two bits, sah," and at the Colonel's gesture he jumped down from

his box and opened the hack door with a flourish.

The children scrambled in obediently, but in silence; then Colonel Nelson also got in, and shut the door.

"To the depot," he ordered. The driver whipped up his lanky old team and in disappointed quiet they were soon at the station and had gloomily boarded the already crawling cars. There, seating themselves midst dirty plush grandeur, they were quickly borne back to Nelsonville, a few stations up the road.

"Well, I wouldn't call this a joy-ride," Lella Byrd commented, breaking the pouty silence for the first time as they descended upon their platform. "But 'scusions ain't much fun nohow when somebody just tries to bring bad luck on everybody all the time by being a butt-headed billy-goat," she hinted gently to Cherub.

CHAPTER IX

THE pale lazy moon who had been in bed all day, yawned, slowly rose up, looked off across the intervening hills through the light that was hurrying after the sun, and into the rose-bowered room at Nelson Hall.

Cherub, lying face-down upon the bed, opened her tear-dimmed eyes straight into his as one always will when being stared at; then turned over impatiently and closed them again. She was very tired, for she had spent most of the afternoon in angry mental protestations against her grandfather, who having brought her home from Mobile had put her in her room and locked the door.

A wave of hot rebellion surged through her again as she once more recalled it all, and yet with it came the consciousness that she did not hate her grandfather as she had been doing. For the dozenth time she recalled the look in his deep-set black eyes when she had defiantly

withstood him on the street in Mobile, and though she resented with her whole soul his exercise of authority over her, and at the time of her punishment felt baffled and more angry with him than ever, now, as she lay wide-eyed and thoughtful, she began to realize that throughout the afternoon he had not uttered a single cross word, and had plainly tried to be kinder to her than he had ever been before.

Presently she said to herself, "I do believe he *could* be a really truly gray grandfather, just like Mary's and Elizabeth's, if he wanted to. He's got love back of his eyes if he'd only let it leak out." Then her heart gave a quick throb as a new thought forced itself upon her, and she whispered, "Maybe his heart's cracked like Grandolly's rememberer. Mammyline said hers cracked 'cause she had too much sorrow in it, and maybe his heart did from having too much love in it. I believe mine would have, too, if it hadn't been for Grandolly and Mammyline, and all the others for my love to leak out on and to help me keep out the weeds that Rosemother told me about. But," sitting up

with excitement at the thought she added aloud, "maybe we can cure him too if we try!"

The sound of the key turning in the door caught her ear and she quickly lay down again. A detached brown face wreathed in smiles appeared for an instant at the crack; then the door was opened wider and the whole of Mammy Caroline came in, a tray held high on her hand. "Am dey all gone?" she beamed, looking about her as though searching for some one.

"Who?" Dorothy asked, looking too.

"Dem seven debils dat got in yer when yer runned away wid Lel'byrd," she answered, setting the tray down in front of the child who had jumped up and was now sitting on the side of the bed. "I'se been prayin' de Lawd to cast 'em out of yer into de pigs agin," she continued seriously, "an' I'se offered him mine, tho' I'd really ruther he'd ruin somebody else's 'stead o' my puffectly good pigs, ef it's the same to Him; still ef hits a matter of you *or* my pigs, chile, why——"

"What are you talking about, Mammyline?" Dorothy interrupted rather impatiently. "I

don't understand one single thing you're saying!"

"Well, never mind den, honey," she soothed. "I'se jes prevaricatin' some situations from de Bible as usual, so jes eat yo' supper. Gawd's pow'ful slow sometimes," she rambled on, "but I reckon ev'ythin' gwine come right sooner or later. Is yer sorry yer runned away?"

Dorothy flushed and hesitated.

"Yo' gran'maw been callin' fer yer all day."

"I'm sorry then," she answered soberly, and her mind turning to the thoughts that had filled it when Mammy came in, she asked suddenly, "Mammyline, do you think my love could cure him too?"

"'Him'? Who 'him'?" she questioned.

"My—my—Colonel Nelson," Dorothy answered, falteringly.

"Colonel Nelson?" Mammy repeated. "Ole Marse? Why, he ain't sick."

"Yes he is, Mammyline," she said dreamily. "He's kind of sick, 'cause there's all kinds of ways to be sick. My Grandolly's rememberer is cracked, so she's sorry sick, and I think his

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heart's cracked and so he's heart sick. I know," she explained, "for hearts are love gardens, Rosemother told me so once, and they have love growing in them instead of flowers; and you must let some of your love leak out, just like you have to pick the flowers to keep them 'cut back.' And then, too, sometimes the hate weeds and bitter plants get in and choke it all up like weeds do in a real garden, and then the heart-kind of garden just cracks open; and I'm sure that must make anybody feel sick—don't you think so, Mammyline? To have your heart crack open? So I want to cure him too with our love. Maybe if he gets used to being loved like you and me, he won't be cross-sick any more either; for being cross is getting choked up with temper peppers, Rosemother said."

Mammy Caroline had been listening in silence, and when Dorothy finished explaining the tears were brimming her faithful old eyes. "Law, darlin'," she said, patting the golden curls, "you'se a reg'lar love incubator de same as me, an' I'll he'p yer ef yer wants to try to cure my Ole Marse. Maybe you'se right

an' he are sick. I'se been thinking lately that he were jes bumptious an' mule-ideaed, but maybe it's heart sickness as yer says. But yer better hurry wid yo' supper kase Ole Marse Sun done called de birds to roost, an' Ole Marse Moon is beginnin' to watch fer chicken stealers, an' I promised yo' gran'maw I'd bring yer to see her befo' dark. She say dis day's seemed pow'ful long widout yer, chile."

"I've finished," Dorothy gulped, swallowing her last mouthful and standing up. "It's seemed more-and-a-million years to me, and I'm never going to leave her again, even if I *am* called a 'fraid-cat, Mammyline," and she danced gaily out of her prison room followed by the smiling woman, who hurried with her down and out into the garden where the mother night breezes were rocking all the baby flowers to sleep, and on towards the little house.

"Dorothy," a deep voice called, and turning quickly she saw Mr. Parker and Laura Byrd coming up one of the garden paths towards her.

"Oh, Cousin Billy-Bil," she cried, running

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to meet him, "I'm so glad to see you; it's been over three days! And did you know," excitedly, "that I've gotten a grandmother while you've been away?" The couple exchanged startled glances, then Dorothy continued, "Yes, and she's in there," pointing to the little house.

"Yes, little girl," he said, "I've been away longer than I had hoped," ignoring the latter part of Dorothy's greeting, not knowing how much she really knew and therefore not daring an answer, "and I've missed you. Good evening, Mammy Caroline," pausing to speak to the negress who had been bowing and curtsying further down the path, but who had now stepped aside to let them pass. "Dorothy, your 'Auntie-La' has something to tell you, dear."

"Yes," she said, taking the child's little hand in hers affectionately, "and Mammy Caroline, I want to tell you too," patting the woman's shoulder, "for you've known both of us ever since we were born, and we *all* loved Rose Nelson. Dorothy, I'm going to marry your Cousin Billy."

"Glory Hallelujah!" Mammy Caroline broke out, too delighted to control herself and grabbing Miss Byrd's hand; "my prayer's been answered at las', fer I ain't blind, honey," kissing the hand as she spoke, "an' I'se known fer years yo' souls was twinses, an' so I jes took it to de Lawd in prayer an' tole him plain out that he was too slow 'bout 'tendin' to his business, an' heah's my reeward a'ready. Hallelujah!" and she took hold of Mr. Parker's hand, too, and pumped it up and down vigorously.

"Thank you, Mammy Caroline," they both said, laughing. "But what do *you* think, Dorothy?" Laura continued, still smiling, but with sudden tears coming to her eyes at the faithful old woman's words.

"I think it's exactly right," the child answered seriously, "for Rosemother told me once that love people were made to marry each other, and you are both love people, 'cause your eyes are sad and loving when you look at Cousin Billy-Bil, like Rosemother's used to be when she talked of Father," repeating what

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she had said to Mr. Parker several days before; "and his are the same way too."

Laura stooped and kissed the little upturned, thoughtful face.

"But where were you going when we stopped you?" Cousin Billy asked, playfully pulling one of Cherub's curls. "You seemed in a mighty big hurry."

"We were going to my Grandolly's—I call her that for a love name, 'cause she *isn't* Miss Hant. I won't let *anybody* call her that," she explained vigorously, "for you see me and Mammyline are curing her rememberer. Aren't we?" addressing the woman who was bowing assent.

The couple again exchanged looks and Laura said, "Dorothy, dear, didn't your grandfather forbid your going there?"

Dorothy looked defiant a moment, then remembering her resolution concerning her grandfather checked herself, and said gently: "Yes, Auntie La, but you see we're going to cure him too."

Laura Byrd looked puzzled, and noticing this Mammy Caroline spoke: "Honey, you-

alls mos' likely doan understand, but yer see my Ole Mis' ain't crazy or hanted an' her mine ain't broke neider, as some of de niggers tries to make out," she declared loyally; "her putty haid jes got too full of worriment over little Mis' Rosey, dat's all. God made it fer sweet thinkin's an' sunshine anyhow, an' so, when de clouds blowed up an' de storms of trouble broke, hit jes natu'ly give out an' went to sleep." She was very earnest and Dorothy stood by her, her little face, as it looked from one to the other of them during this explanation, bright with faith and love. "I'se been praying agin it right along," the woman continued, "but de Lawd doan work through good-fer-nothin' ole niggers like me, I reckon, an' so I'd nearly give up hope when dis sunbeamin' angel-chile come along," caressing Cherub as she talked, "an' I knowed at onc't He'd sont her fer de purpose."

Laura's "sad loving eyes" were bright with interest now, and she slipped her arm through Mr. Parker's as Mammy Caroline proceeded. "An' hit gwiner be like ole Doctor Talliaferro premeditated onc't, fer I does believe her

brains is gwiner wake up. She's been rememberin' things dat she ain't thought of fer years since she seed dis chile, an' I'se noticed de Lawd's han' at work jes a brushin' de cobwebs out of her sky an' makin' her mo' like my ole-time Mis' ev'y minute," she concluded joyfully, plunking herself on the ground and drawing Dorothy to her and beginning to rock back and forth, crooning brokenly.

"Yes, and I'm going to make my—my—I'm going to make Colonel Nelson well, too," Cherub again announced, struggling away from Mammy Caroline's embrace. "I used to hate him, but to-day he locked me in and I had a long puzzly thinky time, and now I know he's heart-sick, so I'm sorry, and we're going to cure him like we're curing Grandolly: then you see he won't be stormy and cross any more."

Laura Byrd did not speak for several seconds; then drawing her companion gently forward she whispered huskily, "Come, Will, we have no right to interfere. They may be right, you know," and smiling into Dorothy's eyes

she went with him down one of the darkening garden paths.

Mammy Caroline arose and taking Cherub's hand in hers proceeded through the garden to the little house whose eyes were beginning to blink with welcome through the gathering dusk. She paused just inside the door, and motioning the child to stay where she was, tiptoed on into the room beyond, where the Sorrylady sat holding a picture of a fair-haired young girl whose rosy mischievous face looked out at her from a mass of clustering curls.

"Has Rose come?" she asked, looking up with anxiety.

"Now Ole Mis'," Mammy Caroline said persuasively, "what's I been tellin' yer? Doan yer 'member? I tole yer dat Gawd took Mis' Rosey kase she's so sweet he wuz jealous of Mis' Yearth and wanted her Hisse'f."

The Sorrylady began to cry.

"But doan yer weep, darlin', please don't," she begged, stroking the bowed white head, "kase He's done give yer a leetle gran'gal in her place dat's her spittin' image, an' she needs

yer pow'ful much. She's allays sayin' 'she's awful used to bein' loved,' an' me an' you jes got to give her as much as she's usen to, dat's all!" The Sorrylady looked up with interest, seeing which Mammy Caroline continued hopefully. "Doan yer 'member what I'se been tellin' an' retellin' yer, darlin'? Think, honey, think! Doan let de cobwebs git yer brains all dusty agin," she pleaded. "She's a reg'lar leetle rose of a gal like her ma, an' her name is Dorothy," fighting hard to bring the light of memory back into the eyes she loved, "yo' gran'gal; an' chillens can't grow widout a understandin' love no mo' dan dem flowers out dar in de gyarden kin grow widout Ole Marse Sun a smilin' at 'em, an' Ole Mis' Cloud a weepin' over 'em, so yer jes mus' wake up yo' rememberer fer her sake."

"Where—is—she?" Caroline's Ole Mis' whispered, trembling as she half recalled all the memories that had come hazily to her the past few weeks. "Is she dead, too?"

"Lawd bless yer, no!" the woman cried joyfully, running to the door as she spoke, and

motioning Cherub to come in. "Heah her is right now!"

Dorothy's grandmother turned and looked at her long and earnestly, while Mammy Caroline watched in an agony of suspense. "Rose?" she said tremulously, then after a pause—"or are you——"

"I'm your name-girl," the child broke in, looking into her eyes earnestly. "I'm Dorothy, but my love-name's Cherub, don't you remember? And me and Mammyline's curing your rememberer so you can love me, for I'm awfully used to being loved and I love *you* next to Rosemother," and cuddling up to her, she took hold of her hands and placed them on each side of her own little face.

Mrs. Nelson continued to gaze back at her silently, but there was a wonderful light of understanding dawning in her eyes now, and after a little she cried happily, "Caroline! I—I remember everything. Come here!" and Mammy Caroline kneeling by her, she drew her brown arm around the child along with her own. "She's ours together," she said whimsically, "because you've really given her

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to me, Caroline, and she shall belong to us both!" Then more seriously, "You're the best friend I ever had," and there were tears on her flushed cheeks as she looked lovingly into the loyal old face before her.

"Lawd bless yo' soul," Mammy Caroline said brokenly, "I ain't done nothin', Ole Mis'!" and she gathered both her old and her young Mis' in her loving arms.

It was this group that met the Colonel's astonished eyes when he paused to look in the window before going in to say good-night, and though he did not understand its import at the time nor realize the wonderful change that had come into his wife's heart and mind it startled and affected him so that he stood motionless, staring in. Then choking back a sob he moved away, feeling, somehow, that he could not interfere, whatever the scene meant. Perhaps William Parker was right—well, he would try to explain things to the child soon.

A little later Laura Byrd and Mr. Parker, strolling back to the moonlit garden, encountered Mammy Caroline standing in the little

doorway, her face fairly shining with happiness.

As she spied them she ran quickly down the steps, beckoning to them. "Come in here, Mis' Laura," she whispered, her voice vibrant with joy, "an' you too, Marse Willie, I'se been looking fer yer," and she once again tiptoed up and across her room into the room beyond. They followed her stealthily, and there in a big chair they saw the little Sorrylady sitting with Cherub curled up in her lap.

Her sweet old face was bright with smiling contentment, but her eyes were full of tears as she bobbed her white curls sympathetically, hearing Cherub tell the story of Rosemother and their home in New England. It seemed the saddest yet the gladdest hour the two of them had ever spent, and the Sorrylady clung to the child's every word. In a moment more, however, they both looked up, startled at the noise made by the others as they came into the room, and the Sorrylady, catching sight of them, looked puzzled for a moment, then with a surprised catch in her

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voice exclaimed, "Why Willie—and Laura!" half rising to greet them.

"Dear Mother-Dolly," Laura said, using the name that she had caught from Rose Douglas when they were babies together, "how wonderful it is to see you better!"

"Yes," she answered vaguely, "yes, I feel better," then remembering more clearly, "oh yes, yes, Laura, I'm much better. I—I remember everything!" Looking from her to William Parker and back again inquiringly: "Have I seen you since—since Rose married?" she asked, worried, her mind unable, as yet, to grasp the situation of years.

"Yes, dear," Laura answered gently, "but you've been very sick ever since, you know, and haven't recognized us."

"You've been sorry-sick, Grandolly," Cherub volunteered, drawing the faded little face so strangely like her own blooming one down closer, "but now me and Mammyline's made your rememberer all well, and you're never going to be a Sorrylady any more; you'll be a love-laugh-lady like Rosemother!"

Her grandmother smiled and kissed her,

then looking at the couple again asked curiously, "Are you married?"

"No, Cousin Dolly," Mr. Parker spoke up, "but we're going to be very soon now," and he took Laura by the hand.

"How—many years—has it been?" she faltered, looking down inquiringly at the child in her lap. "How old are you, my little Rosebud?"

"I was six going on seven when Rosemother went to heaven," she answered seriously, "but I must be a lot older than that now, because that was more-and-a-million days ago, I think."

"Rose married over seven years ago," Laura said softly.

"So long, so long, and you two children not married yet!" she shook her gray curls reproachfully. "You know I told you, Willie, that you were meant for each other, didn't I?—and you, silly boy, thought you wanted Rose, but——"

"Yes, Cousin Dolly," he answered, "you were right, as usual, and we've just found it out," and he smiled happily into Laura's eyes.

"And now, just to think," Laura said, "you

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can make us still happier, dearest, by coming with the Colonel to our wedding."

"No, no!" she cried vehemently, letting Dorothy slide from her lap as she suddenly stood up. "Don't speak of him! I cannot forgive him—I cannot see him since I remember, for it was he who has made me suffer."

"But Cousin Dolly," William Parker said, moving to her quickly as he saw her nervous fright, "he has suffered too in your suffering. Surely you cannot feel bitterness towards him who has loved you so devotedly all his life, even if he did seem cruel to you when Rose disobeyed him," he pleaded.

The little lady looked from one to the other of them, shaking her head.

"You know his temper is his one fault, Cousin Dolly," the man again pleaded, "and he loves you so much it would be wrong not to forgive him."

"Yes, and he's sick, too, Grandolly," Cherub put in, clinging to her skirts and watching her anxiously. "He's heart-sick like you used to be sorry-sick, and that's the reason he doesn't seem to love me and is stormy and cross some-

times. But me and Mammyline's going to cure him, and," smiling brightly at the idea, "you could help us, 'cause you're a love incubator hatching out love all the time like us, too. Won't you help us, Grandolly?"

The little lady hesitated. "You say he doesn't love you?" she asked, troubled.

"Yes, but he's going to soon," Cherub reassured her; and thus comforted she drew Cherub closer, entirely quieted now.

"Dorothy, I will help you," she agreed; "but how shall we do it, dear?" and her face was as anxious as that of the child.

"I don't know exactly. How do you think, Mammyline?" speaking to the negress who had been standing watching her Old Mis' closely all this time.

"I thinks wid love dat comes from a child's heart," she answered, fervently, "fer dat's de realest curator in de worl'."

"Then we'll do it that way," Cherub stated authoritatively. "We'll cure him by loving all his heart-sickness away, won't we, Grandolly?"

"Will you let us help, too?" Laura asked,

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drawing nearer Dorothy; "for I think we could."

"How?"

"Well, with a little mixture of love and surprise, say," she suggested, "for a surprise is sometimes a 'curator' too, Cherub, dear." Then speaking to Mrs. Nelson: "Suppose we keep your being well a secret until a week from to-morrow, Mother-Dolly dearest; that's yours and the Colonel's anniversary, you know."

The little lady gave a start, then sank back in her chair.

"He goes to the Confederate Reunion to-morrow night for a week's stay, so it'll be easy," she continued. "And then just think how happy he will be to come home and find you well and smiling a welcome to him from your own room in Nelson Hall. Won't he, Will?"

"That is a wonderful plan, Cousin Dolly," he said enthusiastically. "Don't you think so?"

Mrs. Nelson looked dazed, then thoughtful, then looking up, said, "Yes—it is. And I'll do it on one condition," shaking her head wisely

at Laura, "and that is, that you and Willie marry that day too."

"Oh, Grandolly!" Cherub exclaimed, and climbing onto her lap again hugged her up excitedly.

"Will you, dear?" William Parker asked.

"To please me, Laura," Mrs. Nelson urged.

"Yes," Laura agreed, "to please you, I will; for I know how happy it will make the Colonel, and you know," she continued, "that he has always been my ideal, even if he did get angry and spank me once," she laughed.

"Oh, Grandolly; Rosemother was right," Cherub said, cuddling still closer and kissing her cheek. "The world *was* made for happiness, and I feel just like my insides had two worlds full of it right now!"

CHAPTER X

MAMMY CAROLINE, hearing the sound of muffled voices, stuck her head outside the kitchen door and gazed about her. The morning sun had just dried all the night-tears away, and the garden gazed back at her in cheery greeting; but no one was in sight.

"Who dar?" she inquired briskly of the whole out-of-doors. "Who dar, I say?"

Then a man cleared his throat and stepped forward into view from around the corner of the house, followed by half a dozen others. "Howdy, Mis' Ca'line," he said, bowing. "Hit's a puddy day. Whar yo' ole man?"

Mammy Caroline looked them all over in silence, then spoke slowly: "I dunno. Why?"

"We'se come to see him on a matter of grave business," the speaker answered solemnly.

"Well, Cicero Cæsar ain't no undertaker!" Mammy Caroline broke in with a toss of her

head and a twinkle; "nor no preacher neider; so ef hits grave business you'se arter yer better look fer Brudder Brown."

There was a general subdued laugh at this sally, but the speaker continued seriously. "Brudder Brown am de grave business hisse'f. He didn't come back wid us on de 'scusion las' night, an' dis mornin' I, as sec'tary of de new church committee, went to git some money outen Marse Willie's bank fer to pay de foundation diggers, an' 'fo' Gawd," his voice rising excitedly, "he say dar weren't none! Brudder Brown drawed it all out yes-tiddy!"

An angry murmur ran through the group, and Mammy Caroline, flinging the door wide open, stepped out onto the back porch. "Goodness—*Godness!*" she exclaimed. "Yer doan say so! An' doan yer know whar de black rascal are?"

"No ma'am, we don't, but we'se been hopin' dat Cicero Cæsar did."

"Well, he don't. I kin tell yer dat, fer in de fust place I'd know too ef he did, an' in de nex' he neber know nothin' nohow; but is

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yer axed Sister Johnson? She seem pow'ful anxious 'bout her soul lately, I'se noticed, an' maybe," she hinted, "maybe, hits jes possible, dat she know more 'bout dat gemman dan we'd care to!"

Their spokesman then announced, with studied emphasis on each word, "Sister Johnson didn't come home on de 'scusion neider," and his companions rolled their eyes at one another significantly.

"Gawd!" she cried. "Yer doan say so! Well dat do look superstitious, sho' 'nough;"

The men cleared their throats and continued rolling their eyes in gentlemanly silence.

"What's the matter, folks?" Lella Byrd called, for having spied the group from 'way down the field she had rushed up as fast as she could. "Razor killin', or crap shootin'?"

The men looked at her unsmiling, but Mammy Caroline grabbed her joyfully. "Law, gemmens," she exclaimed, "maybe dis gal an' my baby-chile, Cherub, kin give yer some inflammation. Jes' hol' yer 'taters a minute!" and she ran into the house, returning almost immediately with Dorothy.

"Now," she addressed them, "dese gals was wid Sister Johnson an' Brudder Brown in a pow'ful queer predicament yestiddy, 'cause dey done told me all 'bout hit."

"But what's the matter?" Dorothy asked, noticing the excited faces of the negroes. "What is it? I don't understand."

"Brudder Brown done obsquandered de church money, chile, an' runned away," Mammy Caroline announced impressively; "dat's what's de matter."

"Humph," Lella Byrd grunted, "I might have known it. We turned 'round and came home from Mobile without spitting in our tracks, and besides that Cherub wouldn't wear her stockings wrong-side out—oh, you'll learn yet not to sass Providence, young lady!" she said to Dorothy, darkly. "Bad luck's not to be sneezed at, like you've been doing, and you're just bringing it down on us all, that's what you're up to!"

"Lel'byrd," Mammy Caroline said, "tell dese gemmens 'bout Brudder Brown's carry-in'-ons in de jewelry shop."

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"Well," said Lella Byrd, licking her lips and taking a long while to speak, full of a mischievous enjoyment at keeping the men in suspense, "me and Ro and Cherub wanted some bananas, so——"

"Doan tell 'em dat, go on fuder," Mammy urged.

"Well, as I was saying," she drawled on, "me and Ro and Cherub wanted some bananas, so Cherub, like a butt-headed billy-goat——"

"Cherub-chile, you tell it, honey," the woman interrupted, speaking to Dorothy and at the same time catching Lella Byrd by the shoulders and shaking her. "I declar', gal, you'se as plaguesome as Marse Job's troubles. Go on, Little Mis'."

"We went into a beautiful jewelry store all made of mirrors," Cherub told them, her eyes big with excitement, "and Brother Brown said they were going to get married, and he gave the jewel man a great big pile of shiny silver dollars for a gold ring, and he put it on her finger."

"And den what? Tell de res', honey, tell

de res’,” Mammy urged, her voice rising to a high treble.

“And then he asked for watches, and the man showed him more-and-a-million of them, and he bought a big one and gave the man some paper dollars like Rosemother used to have,” she concluded.

The negroes were much perturbed at this recital, pushing forward until their angry faces were right against the porch rail.

“An’ what else, Missy? What else?” the speaker for the crowd asked. “Did he git anythin’ mo’?”

“No, we just went out then, and he gave us some money to buy candy with and said they’d come back for us soon, but—but——” she hesitated.

“Old Fire-eater Nelson come along,” Lella Byrd broke in fiercely, “and finished up the bad luck Cherub started by dragging us home,” looking at Dorothy with angry reproach.

“An’ yer doan know whar dem two niggers went?” one of the men asked with evident disappointment.

"No," Cherub shook her head.

"Here comes Uncle Cis'!" Lella Byrd cried, "and I bet bad luck's been chasing him too, from the way he's kicking Ink."

Up the drive, around the house, just then came a black horse in a stiff-kneed lope, while Uncle Cicero Cæsar, clinging to his back, urged him forward faster and faster until they reached the waiting group. "Whoa dar now, Ink!" and sawing upon the bridle he stopped him and tumbled off, waving a paper that he held in one hand.

"Jes' look heah, chillens," he fairly screamed, "Look!" and he thrust a bill-poster in front of them so that those who could could read it.

"My Gawd!" exclaimed the man who had been spokesman. "Listen," and he read, slowly and with difficulty, the words printed on the bill.

"REWARD

"Five Hundred Dollars for information resulting in the capture and return of Bill Baker, convict number thirteen, to the State Penitentiary."

Then followed a description of the missing convict that fitted Brother Brown like an advertisement of a union suit.

"Dat's him all right!" the reader commented, when he had finished spelling it all out. "Ain't it?" to the rolling-eyed listeners, who set up a perfect bedlam of lamentations. "An' jes' to think we missed a bargain like dat; sech easy money! Lawd!" and he slapped his leg in disgust.

"Why yes, it are too bad," Uncle Cis agreed, "fer ef we'd on'y knowed it we could 'er ketched him right in de middle of de baptizin' yestiddy an' had dat money fer to finish de church wid."

"Humph," the other replied; "no church fer me ef I'd ketched him! Dat's enough cash to be a fust-class sinner on, dat is!" and he mumbled miserably over the lost opportunity.

"But here's another sorrow fer yer, Bruders, fer dey seems to come in bunches tied by de Debil, I'se noticed," and Uncle Cis drew a newspaper from his pocket.

"What's that, Uncle Cis?" Dorothy asked, she and Lella Byrd as interested as the others.

"De Mobile Register," he answered literally. "Marse Billy give hit to me, an' jes' yer listen what he read me dat hit say 'bout our dear departed Brudder Brown."

He held the paper first this way, and then that, put on his old square-eyed spectacles, squinted, then handing it to the negro who still held the poster said, "Heah, son, read hit to 'em. My eyes feels kinder twilighty to-day."

This was a regular performance that everyone who knew Uncle Cicero expected. He had never been able to read, but no one had ever succeeded in making him admit that fact, so bowing solemnly the other took the paper.

"Judson Jewelry Store Robbed," he read.

"While waiting upon a negro who called himself Bartholomew Brown, with enough initials attached thereto to satisfy an English younger son, Mr. Judson, Jr., was robbed of a ring and watch yesterday noon, but the theft was not discovered until the man had made good his escape. Accompanying him at the time of his visit to the store were a large mulatto woman of middle age, a little darkie boy, Miss Lella Byrd Lawson, the niece of Miss Laura Byrd of Byrd Nest, Nelsonville, and

another little girl, granddaughter of Colonel Lee Talliaferro Nelson of Nelson Hall, Nelsonville. The latter three were seen to join Colonel Nelson on Main Street a few minutes after the theft occurred, and are said to have immediately returned with him to Nelsonville. The thief and his companion seem to have disappeared absolutely, for as yet no trace of them has been found. Mr. Judson offers a liberal reward for any news of them that may lead to their arrest."

"Lawd he'p us!" the reader ejaculated. "Why couldn't He who 'tends to ev'ybody's business have warned us in some heavenly way dat we had sich a prize preacher amongst us. I knowed dat nigger were a valuable preacher, but I sho' didn't realize he'd turn out to be 'a payin' investment if held,' as Marse Willie say."

"Well, what we-alls gwiner do 'bout it?" Mammy Caroline asked.

"Nothin'," the man grumbled angrily; "dar ain't nothin' we kin do. An' jes' to think of all dem reewards a goin' to some undeesarvin' nigger when I might have arrested my own pastor widout no misgivin's a'tall! I mus' have been borned under a cloud an' on a Friday,

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I'se so onlucky!" and he kept on muttering discontentedly to himself.

"But the church money, Uncle Cis?" Cherub questioned. "How will you get it back?"

"We can't have no new church now, honey," he answered sadly, a sob causing his voice to break," an' I did think my ole bones could be laid to res' from a new buildin' when I done worked so hard fer hit, an' I'se been livin' on de thoughts of how much I wuz gwiner enjoy my funeral, I sho' has," and he turned away from the crowd, wiping his eyes.

"You say, Missy, Sister Johnson's Ro was wid you-alls like dis paper say?" the other man asked, addressing Cherub, while the others talked excitedly among themselves.

"Yes," she answered, "but he came back too, like it said."

"But I'll bet he knows something about it he hasn't told," Lella Byrd volunteered, at once seeing an opportunity to frighten Rochelle-salts.

"Dat's so," the man answered, "he might," and the others bobbed their heads emphatically,

eager to continue their hunt for the offending preacher.

Just at that moment the boom-boom of a big bell sounded through the clear air, and they looked at each other in concern. "Dat's de fiel' bell, o' course, jes at a criminal moment!" one of them growled.

"Yes," their spokesman said, listening as it sounded out again deep and sweet, calling the hands to their day's work, "and us'alls is got to go, but Brudder Cicero Cæsar kin ax Ro, what he know, can't yer?" as they began to scatter.

"Yes, chillens," he assured them, "me an' Ca'line'll be Gawd's houns an' do what scentin' we kin to-day—won't we, honey?" appealing to her.

"Yassiree—bobtail!" she exclaimed, "so you gemmens kin go on 'bout yer business widout no scruples a'tall," and knowing her to be a woman of her word they disappeared quickly into the fields beyond.

"Ca'line, yer know Ro doan know nothin'," Uncle Cis said, taking sides with the child as usual.

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"Well, I ain't so sure," she replied; "I never did feel ve'y much warmf fer dat little brat," she stated—"he's de spittin' image of his ma, an' yer know de opinion I ain't got o' her!"

"Come on, everybody, let's go see," Lella Byrd suggested, starting on a trot down the Nelson's back drive.

The others followed, going out the fence opening that led into an intervening strip of magnolias, then on through the field towards Byrd Nest.

Uncle Cis walked along behind, depressed, for now that the first excitement of Brother Brown's rascality was past and he had had time to think things over, he began to realize what it really meant to him. He recalled all the years of personal sacrifice and deprivation that he had gone through in order to swell the sum which was being hoarded for the building of the new house of worship, and realizing now that it had been for nought after all, he all at once felt old and tired. " 'De rainbow gleam o' my dream' done busted!" he mumbled, quoting a line from a favorite hymn, and sighing wearily.

Lella Byrd, who had kept well ahead of them, paused before a cabin door and knocked loudly. There was no response, and at once becoming impatient she kicked against it and began calling, "Ro, let me in, let me in, or I'll——" but just then the door flew open and she stumbled precipitately into the room. "Why, he ain't here!" she said surprised, looking about as she regained her balance.

Cherub ran in and gazed curiously around at the room, papered with old newspapers and colored fashion-plates, every crack and corner decorated in a fantastic manner with bits of broken glass and china. It was immaculately clean, and somehow the queer hodge-podge, even to the bits of gaily-colored rag-carpet upon the shining pine floor, gave it a festive air that appealed to the eye of the child.

Mammy Caroline and Uncle Cis entered, and Mammy too looked about in surprise. "He ain't heah, sho 'nough," she agreed; "but maybe he's in de kitchen," and she crossed the room to a slanting shed-like apartment beyond, through the door of which could be seen a cook-stove propped up on bricks.

"Lawd Gawd A'mighty!" she exclaimed, as reaching the door she caught sight of Rochelle-salts lying stupidly upon a cot in the far corner.

The girls and Uncle Cis hearing her exclamation hurried in after her, but stopped short as they too saw him there, his little dark face drawn and ashy with pain.

"What's the matter with him, Mammyline?" Cherub asked, going forward at the same instant that Mammy did. "He looks terribly sick."

"He are, chile," she said brokenly, her quick sympathy at once fired for the lonely pickaninny she had criticized only a few minutes before. "He are awful sick," and leaning over she lifted the little fellow in her strong old arms. "Cicero Cæsar, you run arter Dr. Taliaferro. Quick! An' ef he ain't home yit git somebody else. Dis chile's chokin' wid de croup!" And laying him down again she turned his shirt back from his neck, and began rubbing him vigorously. "I wish my Ole Mis' war here," she said, as she worked over the unconscious boy. "Her usen to be de bes'

croup doctor I ever see, an' de heavenly gates is sho' openin' fer dis po' little nigger!"

"I'll get her, Mammyline," Cherub volunteered. "It won't take me a minute!" and she ran swiftly to the door.

"Heah, heah, honey!" Mammy called alarmed. "Stop! Her can't come."

"Why not?" Dorothy asked, pausing.

"Why 'cause—'cause—why I doan know why her can't, sho' 'nough," she answered, remembering the sane sweet expression in Mrs. Nelson's eyes as she had looked up at her upon awaking a little while before.

"Then I'll go," Cherub cried eagerly, and away she sped across the intervening field to the garden at Nelson Hall.

Lella Byrd, for once awed and silenced, stood near the bed watching Mammy Caroline. Her big brown eyes were full of concern, her usually mocking little mouth drawn in a straight, thin line of terror. "I did it," she said aloud. "I pushed him in the pool yesterday and now he's going to die!" But Mammy Caroline paid no attention to her, continuing to work frantically over the choking boy.

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Cherub arrived at the little house within a very few minutes, and burst in upon her grandmother who was sitting holding the picture she had held the night before. Though her eyes were full of tears, she was smiling. "My baby!" she exclaimed joyously, opening her arms as she saw Dorothy.

"Oh Grandolly," Dorothy panted, "Ro's choking with the croup and Mammyline wants you to come. Please do, 'cause I love Ro," she finished persuasively.

Mrs. Nelson looked puzzled. "Who did you say, dear?"

"Ro, Grandolly, Rochellesalts Paregoric Johnson, Sister Johnson's pickaninny boy. She's Lella Byrd's mammy. Don't you understand?"

The little lady shook her head, but rising immediately she said, "I'll go with you though if you need me," and they hurried outside.

"Poor Lella Byrd!" the name having recalled a long forgotten episode. "What a pity she married that no-'count Lawson boy, and she an invalid, too," she murmured as they crossed the garden.

Dorothy hearing the remark, but not understanding, looked up into her grandmother's face, troubled, as she trotted along by her side. "I hope you aren't going to be sorry-sick any more, Grandolly. Lella Byrd didn't marry anybody or be an invalid either. She's Auntie La's and Mrs. Lawson's little girl, and plays with me."

A light came into her grandmother's eyes. "Oh-h," she said; then after a pause, "I keep forgetting I've been 'sorry-sick' so long," and she hurried on with Dorothy, silent and thoughtful.

Lella Byrd, watching, spied them coming, and when she saw who it was with Dorothy she gave a cry of horror. "Oh Gawd, it's Mis' Hant!" and flopping upon the floor would have crawled under the bed, but Mammy Caroline grabbed her by the foot.

"Heah you, Lel'byrd," she admonished, "I won't have yer actin' like dat over my Ole Mis'. She's got mo' sense dan you is right now, so yer jes stan' up dar," yanking her upon her feet, "or I'll 'Mis' Hant' you!"

The two entered, and Mrs. Nelson saw her

standing wild-eyed and scared. "Is this Lella Byrd?" she asked in her sweet voice, going nearer and smiling at her, her gentle eyes full of interest. "How like Laura you look." Then seeing the boy on the bed cried, "Oh, Caroline, the poor baby!" and sprang forward and took Rochellesalts from her. "Hot water, and flannel and—there, there!" as the boy struggled to breathe, "you poor little fellow!" And laying him on the bed again she and Mammy Caroline worked hard as the minutes slipped by and the Angel of Death hovered so near.

Finally his pinched face lost its ashy look, the clutching hands relaxed, and Rochellesalts opened his eyes into the eyes of the sympathetic face above him and whispered hoarsely, "Is you Gawd?"

"No, child, I'm your Old Mis'."

"I—ain't—got—none," he slowly answered. "I ain't got—nobody. Mammy's gonied away an' lef' me, an' I'se all by myse'f in de dark," recalling now the long night when, alone and too sick to call anyone, he had lain there fright-

ened half to death. "I hoped—I'd done—died!" he sighed, and closed his eyes wearily.

A sob broke from Mammy Caroline, and there were tears on Mrs. Nelson's flushed cheek as Mammy motioned her back and seating herself upon the bed gathered him to her breast. "Did him want to go to heaven," she crooned, rocking him back and forth, humoring him. "Yes him did, him wanten be a golden haired angel an' have wings, but him can't, kase Mammy Ca'line needs a little pickaninny herse'f, so him gwiner git well an' be hern."

The two little girls crowded nearer in sympathy, and opening his eyes Ro looked into those of Lella Byrd. "I—doan want—golden hair. I wanten look—jes' like Lel'byrd," he declared in a loyal whisper. "An'—I—doan wanten go to heaven an' leave her—nohow," more strongly; and smiling at her he closed his eyes and slept.

A few moments later Mrs. Nelson, leaving the cabin and starting towards her little house, was seen passing through the grove by Colonel Nelson who was out for his morning ride.

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Reining in his horse at the surprising sight he gasped, "Dolly! what are you doing here!"

She gave him a quick look, in which it seemed to him he had a fleeting glance of the great love she had once borne him; but without answering she hurried away.

He sat his horse and watched her. "God! If it were only true!" he exclaimed. "But of course it's only my imagination," he added bitterly, "Oh, Dolly, Dolly!" and dismounting he strode on to the negro cabin with bowed head.

"Oh!" Cherub said, as running blindly after her grandmother she almost bumped into him and stopped bewildered.

"Girl, you here too?" he exclaimed; then in his old-time angry voice demanded, "Why have you disobeyed me? I told you to remain in your room—and you disobeyed me too last night. Answer me. What does this mean?"

Dorothy's head went up and her eyes flashed; then remembering in time she forced the angry words back, and stood mutely before him. The surprise of seeing her, after the other surprise, had thrown him completely off his guard, and

he continued in the harsh tone which he had decided not to use towards her again: "Go home," pointing his crop towards Nelson Hall. "You've got to learn to obey!" Then a little less harshly, "I'm going away, and you're not to go outside the house while I'm gone—except into the grove," he amended. "Now go!"

But Dorothy had already turned to obey and was walking away angrily, her whole body shaking with repressed emotion.

He stood watching her as she went slowly and steadily, never looking back, and then was surprised and annoyed to see her turn and deliberately come towards him again. She hesitated a moment as she stopped in front of him, then said in a low forced voice, "I'm sorry for you. I'm sorry you're heart-sick, so I'll mind you this time." Then smiling a drawn little white smile, "But we'll cure you soon, and then you won't talk to me like you do any more," and she left him dumfounded, and ran towards Nelson Hall.

CHAPTER XI

FOR a whole night and half a day Heaven had been scolding and weeping over the Earth in all her sinfulness, but now the Sun, determined to end the quarrel, had come between the two and was smiling cheerfully at his success.

Cherub, relieved to get out of doors again, ran gaily from the back door of Nelson Hall and started towards the garden where hundreds of baby rainbows were dancing midst the wet flowers; then suddenly remembering her promise to Colonel Nelson she stopped and frowned. "It's not fair," she grumbled, "and I hate him—no, no, I don't!" quickly correcting herself; "but he really doesn't understand, and I've a good mind to go anyway," but she still stood looking wistfully towards the little house.

Just then Mammy Caroline appeared in its doorway and beckoned her. "Come here,

honey," she called in her mellow voice. "Yo' gran-maw wants yer."

Dorothy started to obey, then stopped again and shook her head sadly.

"What's the matter? Come on down, Baby-chile," rather impatient at the other's hesitation. "Her's been sick all night an' needs yer!"

"I can't, Mammyline," Cherub called back, and returned slowly towards the big house.

"Well, what ails de gal!" Mammy Caroline exclaimed, entirely unable to understand such conduct, and hurrying at once across the garden she caught up with Dorothy just as she reached the front steps.

"Chile!" she said severely, "doan yer inten' to mine yo' gran'maw? Her sent fer yer."

Dorothy ran up the steps, then turned a distressed face around and looked into the woman's eyes. "Oh, Mammyline, I can't," she almost cried. "I told you about my promise."

Mammy Caroline sniffed. "Humph, is dat de trouble? Well eve'y Quality lady, black an' white, promises promises dat *ain't* promises some time fer manner's sake, so doan let dat

worry yer. Come on," and she turned towards the garden, expecting Dorothy to follow without further argument.

"I can't go, Mammyline," Cherub repeated firmly.

"But her needs yer," she argued.

Cherub's eyes filled with tears. "Yes, and I need her, too; but I can't go just the same."

Mammy Caroline stopped again and stared, half provoked by what she thought was stubbornness on the child's part. Dorothy perceiving this tried to explain. "You see, Mammyline," she said, "if I'm going to help cure him with love, I've got to love him whether I do or not; and when you love anybody you never break a promise to them, 'cause Rose-mother told me so once. So I can't go to see my Grandolly for a whole week," and bursting into tears she ran wildly through the open door.

"Why, Dorothy, what's the matter?" Laura Byrd exclaimed as she came toward the door from the back of the hall and saw the child enter. "I've come over to see you and have been looking all over the house for you."

"Oh, Auntie La, my Grandolly's sick and I

promised I wouldn't go there until he got back. Oh-h!" and she ran on past her and tore up the stairs into her room and flung herself upon the bed. "I hate him, I hate him!" she screamed in a perfect rage; then shocked at her own violence sat up and tried to choke back the tears. "No, no," she again sobbed, "I didn't mean that. I love him."

"Why you poor little puddle-duck!" Auntie La said sympathetically, having followed her upstairs. "Tell me all about it," and she seated herself upon the bed and drew the excited girl to her. Dorothy somewhat comforted at this told of her encounter with Colonel Nelson the day before, while Laura Byrd listened quietly until the recital was over; then without speaking she arose thoughtfully and abruptly left the room.

Cherub, surprised, sat gazing blankly after her, listening to the sound of her footsteps as she ran down the stairs. Then she heard Mammy Caroline's name called, her answer, and their two voices in muffled conversation a moment, after which a door banged and all was still.

Too full of curiosity to remain quiet she hopped from the bed and ran downstairs, and on through the big hall to the back door. Opening this she saw Laura and Mammy Caroline fast approaching the little house in the garden. They were evidently talking to each other very earnestly, and running on out of the door Cherub watched them until they disappeared within. Then turning her back on temptation she walked around to the front grove and sat down beneath her favorite magnolia, forlorn and disconsolate.

Mrs. Nelson, lying upon a couch, her face flushed and her eyes big with feverish brightness, looked up as Laura entered. "Oh," she said disappointed, "I thought it was my baby. Why doesn't she come to me?" fretfully; "my head aches so, I want her little, cool fingers."

Laura's eyes were full of concern as she looked at her. "Mother-Dolly," she said, going over and putting her fingers upon her forehead, "I'm afraid you've had too much excitement the last few days, for you look very tired."

The little lady shook her head impatiently,

murmuring, "I want my baby, I want little Dorothy."

"And I think you should keep quiet now," she continued, "for you don't want to get really sick and upset our wedding-day plans, you know."

"But I want Dorothy. I want my little Rosebud. Why doesn't she come?"

"Because, dear," Laura answered, "she promised her grandfather not to."

"Then I'll go to her!" Mrs. Nelson exclaimed, jumping up and making for the door, but having to sit down again before she reached it. The tears brimmed her eyes at this, like a tired child's, and she said, "I'm not very strong yet, Laura, and I must have her near me. I must! Why, sometimes I wake up in the night and feel I'll lose my mind for good and all if I can't take her in my arms at once! She's everything to me now and I don't want to be her 'Sorrylady' again."

Laura Byrd was worried. She knew that though Dorothy and Mammy Caroline had succeeded in restoring Mrs. Nelson's memory they had probably broken every rule by which

science would have treated the case, and had put her through a terrible nervous strain such as no physician would have allowed. And now she feared, as she watched her stand up and walk feebly forward once more, that the physical reaction had come and that she would be more ill than before. Doctor Talliaferro too was away, the only doctor who had ever seemed to understand her, and with this thought came the realization that she, Laura, would have to act according to her own judgment and act quickly at that.

"Mother-Dolly," she coaxed, running to her, "I don't think I'd try that, dear; you aren't strong enough."

"But I must, Laura," she answered distressed. "You don't seem to understand," and catching sight of Mammy Caroline who had been waiting, worried and prayerful, in the next room, she said: "Caroline can carry me; can't you, Caroline? I want to go back to my old room," smiling for the first time into Mammy's anxious face.

She and Laura exchanged looks, and then

Laura agreed quietly, "Perhaps that would be better after all, Mammy Caroline."

"Yes, I must do that!" Mrs. Nelson stated, positively. "I'm too restless here," looking excitedly about her at the room which for so long had been the only place in which she would willingly remain. "I want to be in my own room again, with my little Rosebud in the one beyond, where Rose used to be. It's the only way I can be happy now," and her dilated eyes looked up in appeal at her faithful old servant.

"Den I'll tote yer," she soothed, and gathering the little figure up bodily the three of them passed up the flower-bordered garden path and entered Nelson Hall.

"Heah we is—home," the negress said joyfully, and climbing the stairs they entered a sunny room where she deposited her precious burden upon a fat, old-fashioned feather-bed that lay sleeping between its curved head- and foot-boards.

Mrs. Nelson smiled contentedly as she looked about her at the familiar objects that seemed crowding forward as if in welcome. It was

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the room in which Rose had been born, and the roses now, as then, smiled in at the windows, sending her their perfumed kisses. Through the open door she could see the room beyond, once Rose's, but now her little granddaughter's, and as she looked at Rose's portrait hanging over the mantel it seemed to smile at her, as it had upon Dorothy many weeks before, and she too seemed to hear it say, as she had often said to the real Rose, and Rose had often said to Cherub, "Be happy, dear, for the world is made for happiness."

Laura, noticing that Cherub was no longer upon her bed, stepped to the window and parting two clusters of gossiping blossoms put her head out and called to the forlorn little figure she discovered seated in the grove, "Dorothy! Dorothy, dear!"

The child looked around and, seeing her, stood up, surprised.

"Come here," and she drew in her head, continuing, however, to watch Cherub as she came slowly towards the house and entered the wide front door just beneath.

"Dorothy's coming to you, Mother-Dolly,"

she said, going to the bedside where Mammy Caroline was fussing about, doing everything she could to make the little invalid comfortable.

In a moment more the little girl entered. Her face was clouded and sad, but as she caught sight of her grandmother a radiant sunbeam of love broke over it, and she ran to her, scrambling silently up on the bed beside her. Mrs. Nelson opened her arms, and she crawled into them. "Oh, Granddolly, are you going to live here now? Are you going to stay? Tell me, tell me!"

"Yes—Granddaughter," she answered, hugging her up.

Laura signaled to Mammy Caroline and they started to leave the room; but Mrs. Nelson discovered it and motioned for them to stop. "Don't go," she begged. "My head's much better."

"But I think you should be quiet, dear," Laura answered.

"I don't want to be quiet. I want to talk of your wedding day," and, after a pause, "I want to plan our surprise for the Colonel;"

then smiling, "it will be such a happy time for us both!"

"Oh, I know it will," Laura responded. "It's simply wonderful to think of it!" and she returned to Mrs. Nelson's side, her eyes beaming. "But can't we talk of all that to-morrow?"

"No, no," she replied childishly, "I want to talk it all out *now*."

"But you really ought to be quiet," Laura repeated, troubled.

"No, Laura, I can't be, not until I've planned everything. Please!" she pleaded wistfully. "I've got so many years to make up; don't argue!" and she put her hand to her head.

"Very well, then," Laura conceded soothingly, "I'll tell you how Will and I had planned it; but lie back down, dear," as Mrs. Nelson and Cherub sat up, "you must try to keep as quiet as possible. We're going to have only the family, you know," she explained, speaking in a low, soft voice, still rather worried at the little lady's evident excitement, but believing she was acting for the best in humor-

ing her, "so it will be very easy for you to come."

Mrs. Nelson nodded.

"And as Colonel Nelson gets back at three o'clock and has promised to come to Byrd Nest straight from the train, you can be there in the parlor waiting for him."

Mrs. Nelson again nodded, her face full of interest, but trying to control her excitement as Laura continued. "Then when he steps up on the porch Will and I will meet him in the hall and tell him we have a great happiness for him, open the parlor door, and—you can do the rest; with the help of Dorothy's and Mammy Caroline's love, of course," she hastened to add. "Don't you think that will cure his heart-sickness, honey?" addressing Cherub. Then to Mrs. Nelson again, "And do you like that plan?"

Mrs. Nelson lay still for quite a long time, the three of them watching, but though she did not speak Laura and Mammy Caroline knew from her expression that she was picturing the scene to herself, and that her mind, as well as her heart, had found a great con-

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tentment in its contemplation. The feverish color had gone from her cheeks, and she smiled happily as she finally said: "Yes, Laura. I like it very much; and oh, child, I'm so happy!"

"Glory Hallelujah!" Mammy Caroline cried softly, dropping on her knees by the bed. "Our love is a-workin', little God-sent gal, hit's a-workin' sho'!"

CHAPTER XII

THE next few days passed swiftly for those at Nelson Hall, and Mammy Caroline, kept busy by the needs of her Ole Mis' and the added care of Rochellesalts, often declared that she "had to do her breathin' at night!" The boy was well again, it was true; but neither the law's officers, nor the angry negroes whose church fund had been stolen, nor yet Mammy Caroline and her husband, the self-appointed "houns of Gawd," had been able to trace Brother Brown and his companion, and so Ro had remained in their cabin to which she had carried him on the night following his illness, and now after a week's stay had been adopted as their son and heir.

Mrs. Nelson continued to grow stronger hourly, and Cherub, really happy for the first time since that morning in Middleboro when Samantha Hard told her of her mother's death, never left her side. They played and talked

together like two children, and neither of them tired of each other's stories about Rose Douglas. She was more than ever a sweet influence in her little daughter's life, and they both felt that she was a very living presence with them, so constantly did each see in the other the most beautiful characteristics of her beautiful nature. And so she lived again, parted by death, but deathless for these two who loved her better than all the world.

Colonel Nelson too came in for his share of their thoughts, for Dorothy and Mammy Caroline believed more firmly than ever in the ability of their love to cure, and now that she had forgiven him Mrs. Nelson longed for the hour to come when she could begin making up for the years they had lost. She realized from bits of information unwittingly given by Mammy Caroline from time to time that he was very unhappy and sorely in need of her, and with this realization had returned her old-time love for him.

Laura and William Parker had been over every morning to discuss their coming marriage, and also the surprise they were plan-

ning, which, to do them justice, seemed to make them happier than the plans for their own happiness. Everything, in fact, had been arranged, and for Mrs. Nelson there was only one cloud, and that was her ever-growing fear that Cherub's love-charm would not work the change in the Colonel that she and Mammy Caroline so firmly believed. Mrs. Nelson understood the fiery-tempered old gentleman as no one else did, and knowing that forgiveness was the hardest of all things for him she dreaded the time when the charm should be tested, for she doubted whether love or anything else could ever bring him to feel affection for Rose's child.

And now, as she and Dorothy with Mammy Caroline and Uncle Cis were driving rapidly over the short distance that separated Nelson Hall from Byrd Nest, the cloud seemed to darken her whole horizon and she gave her mind up almost to despair.

Dorothy, however, filled with joyous excitement over the part she was to play within the next hour in her Auntie La's wedding ceremonies, and entirely confident that eventually

success would crown her plan to win her grandfather's love, sat by Mrs. Nelson, her hand held tightly within her own, and smiled out at the yellow jessamine they passed, glorious in the spring sunshine.

"Heah we is at de bridal po'tals, honey," Uncle Cis announced presently, swinging Maud and Molly around with a flourish and yanking the reins to make them stop at the door of Byrd Nest, proud, as usual, of his self-admired horsemanship. "We sho' didn't tag along at Time's tail dis evenin', who-a-a—!" and he succeeded in making them come to a halt. Cherub jumped down, while Uncle Cis followed more slowly and handed out his Ole Mis' and Caroline from the spacious landau.

The stately old red-brick house covered with glossy ivy, which hid, like the pride of the Quality within, time's ravages and fortune's reverses from the gaze of curious strangers, seemed to give a courtly welcome to these next plantation neighbors as they ascended its broad steps and were greeted by Aunt Lucretia Jane. She, excited and pleased, had been on the watch for them, and opened the front door just at

the proper moment, displaying herself in a new calico with snowy head-kerchief tied above her smiling old wrinkled face.

"Come right in, Mis' Nelson. Gawd bless yer," she greeted them. "An' you too, Missy!" Then to Caroline, "Sis' Ca'line, you an' Brud-der Cicero Cæsar's to jine me in de kitchen till Mis' Laura calls us, den we-alls goes in de parlor."

Lella Byrd, her eyes snapping with some concocted mischief or other, but the rest of her face quite demure, now pushed aside the curtains at the far end of the hall and came running forward. "Howdy, folks," she said, self-consciously switching her crispy lawn skirts from side to side, but looking askance at Mrs. Nelson in spite of what she had seen and heard of her recovery. "Everybody's in the parlor, even mother, and you are to go right in," and she crossed over to the parlor door, opening it, but surreptitiously making signs to Dorothy not to go in.

Mrs. Nelson entered and Cherub followed, in spite of Lella Byrd's signals, and as they stepped into the long, white wainscoted room

Cherub caught her breath with pleasure. The softly faded green walls with the rich old mahogany furniture of by-gone Byrds glowing dully against it, the portraits in their tarnished frames, the doorways, the creamy old lace curtains, everything was decorated with boughs of dog-wood and apple-blossoms. The prism crystals of a huge lamp that hung from the ceiling caught the sun's beams that streamed through a high rose-paned window, and turning them into many-colored jewels flung them about the walls and floor, where they lay gleaming. In front of the window stood a low altar banked in Easter lilies with burning candles in high old silver candelabra on either side.

Mr. Parker and Laura Byrd jumped up and came forward, Laura's face glowing, her big brown eyes full of joy. She wore her mother's wedding dress, a quaint old brocade rich with cobwebby lace, that had come down to her from a Colonial grand-dame, and she looked as she stood there the embodiment of all that is sweetest and best in the women of the Sunny Southland.

"Oh, Mother-Dolly," she cried gladly, kissing her, "just to think you are really here! Come, Will, and salute the bride!"

"Which one?" he asked, smiling at her.

"The forty-years' one, the only one—yet," she answered, and he kissed Mrs. Nelson gently; then turning to Cherub, caught her up, and whispering something in her ear laughed and set her down again.

"Aren't you going to let us see Mrs. Nelson?" a frail voice asked, and they all turned towards the corner from which it had come, where sat a slender pale woman in a wheel-chair, and beside her a flower-faced girl, hers and Laura's niece.

"Why Lella!" Mrs. Nelson exclaimed, going over towards them. "And Page!" as she came forward and greeted her. "What a *real* young lady you are," and then again to the invalid, "How are you, Lella?"

"Exactly the same," she replied. "Years don't change me much, 'a creakin' door stays on its hinges a pow'ful long time,' you know," she quoted; "but I'm so glad *you* are better," and her sad, wan face lit up with a smiling

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look that transformed it into something beautiful, or so it seemed to Dorothy who stood looking at Lella Byrd's invalid mother for the first time.

"Cherub," Lella Byrd called in a hoarse whisper from the doorway where she still stood making signs and frowning, "come here, I need you."

Dorothy started to obey, but Auntie La laid a detaining hand upon her curly head. "Lella Byrd," she said, "you come in here and sit quietly with Dorothy. It won't be long now, and I don't want you to get your dress all mussed."

Lella Byrd hung back. "But I've been helping Aunt Lucretia Jane, and I'm not getting mussed." Then as Laura still kept hold of Dorothy she continued persuasively, "There's really something I need Cherub to help me with, Aunt Laura," and she controlled the mischievous expression in her big eyes as best she could, and her little mouth was very serious.

"Very well, then," her aunt answered, removing her hand from Cherub's head; "but

mind, you're not to go outside the door. Understand? You know you are to hold my flowers when the time comes."

"Yessum," she meekly assented, but her eyes snapped again and laughing roguishly she and Cherub ran down the hall.

"I thought you'd never come, Cherub," she complained, "and you just wouldn't pay no 'tention to my signs, and here me and Ro's waiting to have you join in the fun! We're having a grand time!" and she led the way back to the pantry, which being in the main house was separated from the old-fashioned kitchen by a long, latticed passage-way.

Dorothy entered and saw Rochellesalts digging down into the already-hollowed-out middle of a huge frosted cake turned upside down on the floor in front of him.

"Come on now, Cherub," Lella Byrd cried gaily, sitting down and beginning to help Ro remove more of the cake, but leaving the frosting intact, "here, it's fine, take some," and she handed Cherub her knife with a chunk balanced upon it. "Just dig in when you want more," and taking a spoon herself she exca-

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vated another piece and smacking her lips said, "Lady Baltimore, made in Mobile—Aunt Laura's weddin' cake. Gee, it tastes like more, don't it, Ro?"

"Yassum," he gurgled, so stuffed he could barely articulate.

Cherub laid down her knife thoughtfully. "Did Auntie La say we could have it?" beginning to feel doubtful of Lella Byrd.

"Why no, of course not; that's part of the joke," she replied, still stuffing. "When we get through we'll turn it right side up again and nobody'll know the difference 'til they cut it; then—whack!—it'll all fall to pieces!" and she and Ro stopped digging a moment and rolled on the floor in a gale of merriment at the thought.

"But Auntie La may not like to have a joke-cake at her wedding," Cherub said, trying to join in the laugh, but troubled nevertheless.

Lella Byrd sat up annoyed. "No, of course she won't; she'll be mad as the Devil when he loses a sinner; but there!" seeing Dorothy's quick move toward the cake and understanding its import, "I won't joke with it any more,

Miss Prissy," and she placed it carefully upon the plate, right side up, but giving Ro a meaning wink that set him to laughing again. "I'll put it back on the shelf, and——"

"Lella Byrd, what yer doin' wid dat cake, humph?" Aunt Lucretia Jane broke in, coming up the passage-way and pausing as she caught sight of her. "You jes' perlutely put hit back whar yer got it, yer hear?" and she stepped forward sternly.

"All right, I'll put it back," doing so as she spoke, "but I sho' wish it was time to cut it," and she gave Ro another wink that fairly doubled him up with mirth as Lucretia Jane, now satisfied and not suspecting the cake's condition, went on. Lella Byrd, ignoring Cherub completely, whispered something to the boy, and giggling he exclaimed, "Law, Lel'byrd, you'se de cut-uppest gal I ever see."

Lucretia Jane again appeared at the pantry door, and said, "Do'thy, chile, yo' gran'maw wants yer." Then to the others, "You-alls come on out of heah 'fo' de Debil begins work-in' yer. Git!" and she yanked Rochellesalts

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out of the door and Lella Byrd followed reluctantly.

With a sense of relief Cherub jumped up and ran into the parlor, calling, "Here I am, Granddolly; Aunt Lucretia Jane said you wanted me."

The little lady drew her close up against her knees. "Yes, I do. It's about time your grandfather was here, and I need you with me." Then after a pause, "There he is now," listening as a horse came trotting up the driveway.

Cherub gave her a hug for answer and Mrs. Nelson, flushed and nervous, held to her as Mr. Parker and Laura opened the front door to admit Colonel Nelson.

"Howdy do," a strange voice said, and a tall old gentleman, very stoop-shouldered, stepped into the hall.

"Oh, good evening, Dr. Carter," Mr. Parker said. "We thought it was Colonel Nelson. Come in, sir," and he and Laura shook hands with the minister.

"It's queer that the Colonel hasn't come," frowned Laura. "Did you see anything of

him, Dr. Carter? We heard the train whistle twenty minutes ago, and he should be here by now."

"No," the minister answered. "No, I didn't, Miss Laura. Howdy do, Mrs. Nelson," catching sight of her, and, having been forewarned, crossing over and speaking as if he had seen her regularly. Then shaking hands with the rest he began making Cherub's acquaintance.

"Shall we wait, Laura?" Mr. Parker asked. "Unfortunately, you know, Dr. Carter's got to catch the north-bound at four-thirty."

"But Colonel Nelson must have come," Laura objected. "Let's wait ten more minutes, anyway," and they sat about talking until Mr. Parker, restless and worried, snapped his watch shut and turned from the window out of which he had been looking anxiously.

"Time's up," he warned.

"Then please go tell the servants and children to come on in, Will, dear," Laura said with evident disappointment that they could not wait for the Colonel.

Mr. Parker left the room, and Laura going

over to Mrs. Nelson stood talking to her in a low tone.

Very soon Aunt Lucretia Jane, Mammy Caroline and Uncle Cis, accompanied by several other broadly grinning negroes, entered, their eyes rolling excitedly, and silently arranged themselves in a dark cloud against the nearest wall. They all watched Laura with mingled fondness and respect, and their loyal hearts sent up a prayer for her future happiness and joy, for she was dearly loved by every one of them.

The minister took his place behind the altar. Page, the pretty young niece, began playing softly upon the old square piano, and Laura stood waiting for Mr. Parker to join her, when suddenly a chuckle broke from Uncle Cis. "Lawdy, look dar," and they all followed his gaze toward the far doorway where Lella Byrd, with Mr. Parker back of her and Ro tagging along as usual, stood grinning in at them.

"Why, Lella Byrd Lawson!" Laura cried, immediately catching sight of her smutty face, "where have you been?" Then losing her pa-

tience entirely she said, "You are a bad girl to have disobeyed me; and now just look at you!"

Lella Byrd looked herself up and down as though quite surprised at the dirt she saw, and Mr. Parker, laughing outright, passed her and joined Laura where she stood.

"I didn't disobey you, Aunt Laura. I didn't disobey you one bit!" she said in an injured tone. "Me and Ro just got to thinking and remembered you didn't have a horseshoe to stand on—it's awful bad luck to get married unless you're standing on a horseshoe, you know," she explained, holding one up as she spoke, "and so I went out and got you one. See!" and entering the room she placed it on the floor before the altar.

"But I told you not to go *outside the door*," Laura returned severely, knowing the child too well to be appeased by her ready argument.

"Yes, and I didn't," she affirmed, "I went down in the cellar and crawled up through the coal hole! You 'surely didn't think I'd disobey you on your wedding day, Aunt Laura!"

and her big eyes were apparently so earnest with affectionate appeal that Laura had to laugh.

"Well, you can't hold my flowers looking that way, you bad child, and there's no time for you to go upstairs and wash; so Cherub," turning away and addressing her, "you'll have to carry them as well as carry my prayer-book, dear."

Mr. Parker said something in a low tone, and taking his arm they walked forward to the altar of white blossoms, while Page began playing again softly.

"Oh-h, Aunt Laura!" Lella Byrd cried, her bravado all gone, "don't say that, oh don't!" and her eyes filled with uncontrolled tears. "I just can't bear it!" and she ran up to her, holding her arms out for the roses.

Laura Byrd, so happy herself, hated to cause anyone else unhappiness, and though she instinctively hesitated a moment as she looked again at the ridiculously smutty child, she finally handed her the bouquet, remarking with a whimsical smile, "You don't look much like a wedding attendant; but there, dear, you can

carry them," and Lella Byrd clasping them to her breast grinned around at the assemblage satisfied.

* * * * *

The ceremony was soon over and everybody in the room crowding around Mr. and Mrs. Parker.

Mrs. Nelson, as excited as the negroes, ran forward like a girl and threw her arms about Laura, while Page wheeled her Aunt Lella's chair nearer, and the negroes forgot completely their Quality house-manners and laughed noisily, pushing and crowding each other in their eager efforts to offer their congratulations.

"Law, Mis' Parker," giggling at the new name, "Gawd bless yer, honey!" said one.

"Yes, an' you too, Marse Willie," said another.

"An' may yer blessin's be many an' far between."

"An' trouble keep knockin' widout gittin' in!" each vieing with the others in their endeavor to make appropriate remarks to the laughing bride and groom.

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They were all like light-hearted holiday children in their excitement and honesty of good will, and the couple who had known and loved them as well as been loved by them all their lives saw nothing unusual or incongruous in the scene. They accepted their expressed good wishes with kindly words of appreciation, and shook the hands of each of them in turn.

Mammy Caroline, too overcome for a minute to join in, flopped down on the floor as she always did during moments of strong emotion, and drawing Cherub into her arms rocked back and forth crooning rhythmically; then raising herself with an effort she joined the others who had continued to make such a hullabaloo that Colonel Nelson entered the room unobserved by anyone but Laura. She saw him at once, however, and whispered to Mrs. Nelson, "Here's the Colonel, Mother-Dolly! Hide behind me, quick!" and, laughing, she stepped in front of the little lady, and spreading out her skirts completely concealed her while holding out both of her hands to the Colonel.

"You bad, bad Colonel," she scolded gaily.

"Don't you know I don't feel half married without *you* here to help!" and she tried to pout just the way she remembered having done as a child whenever he had disappointed her in any way. "What was the matter?"

"Ink," he replied shortly. "Got the sulks, 'clogged and wouldn't run,' as Uncle Cis says of him; but who are you hiding?" Then without waiting for her answer, "I want to salute the bride mighty much," and his sombre old face brightened with affection as he stooped towards her.

"All right. Here she is!" and stepping quickly aside as she spoke, Laura left Mrs. Nelson standing tremulous, but smiling, in front of him, guarded on either side by Cherub and Mammy Caroline.

"Dolly!" he cried, "Dolly!"

"Yes, dear," and she came closer and looked lovingly into his eyes.

"What does it mean?" he asked blankly, still too surprised to move.

"It means, Colonel," putting her arm about Dorothy and drawing her forward also, "that we've got the dearest little granddaughter in

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the world, and that her love has cured me! I'm all well; think of it, dear! Entirely well, and oh, so, so happy!" and standing on tip-toe she laid her hands on his broad shoulders, and he took her in his arms.

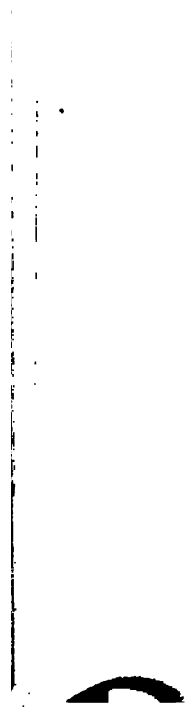
Presently she drew back again and asked, "Won't you love her, too? She's all the baby I've got now. Won't you try to love our Rose's little girl?"

Colonel Nelson stood and looked from her to Cherub's pleading face, and back again, his black eyes dim with feeling; then, kissing his wife gently, he turned to the child and with a glad break in his voice held out his arms.

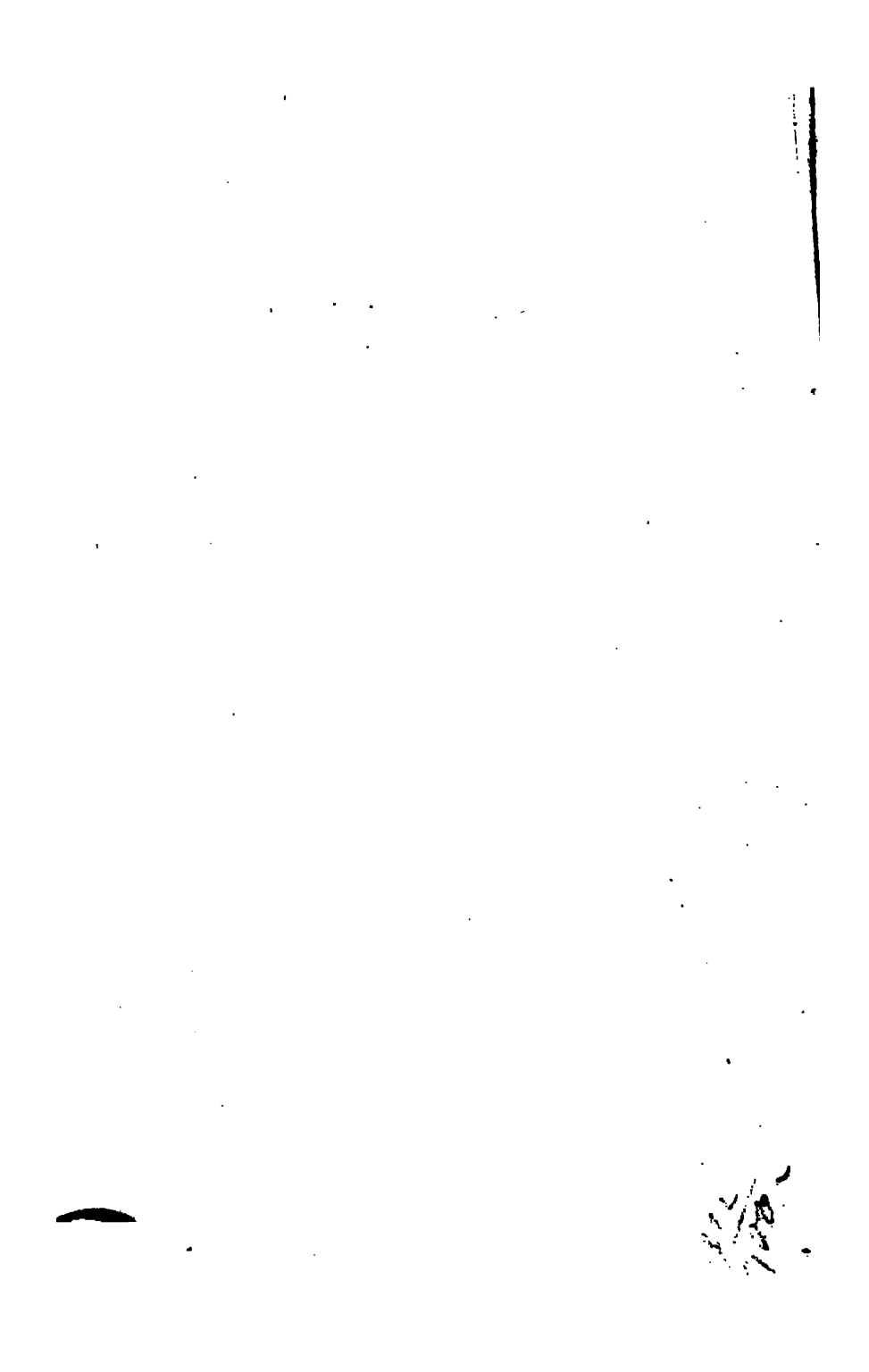
"Dorothy!"

As Cherub ran to him a sob broke from Mammy Caroline who had flopped down on the floor again and was hugging Mrs. Nelson about the knees. "Thank Gawd, our love's done worked," she cried. "Yes, leetle gal, it's done worked fòr sho' dis time, and me an' all de udder angels, too, I reckons, is jes singin' hallelujahs in our hearts fer gladness!"

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